



Of *The Diary of a Country Priest* it was said . 'This will become a classic.' The present new work by Georges Bernanos again possesses that same *classic* quality, since the writer sees into the very essence of passing things. Here, with the almost startling original vision of a Christian thinker, he views the modern world, approaching such problems as the Spanish War, Money, the Stupid, Fascism, and the Church, strictly in terms of his belief. His conclusions may well astonish the more orthodox, but to those who can see, they will seem the expression of as yet unformulated truth, profoundly inspired. ,

'This book is the testimony of a free man,' the author writes—and it will be difficult for most readers not to feel that they have been shown the world as never before. His voice has notes of the deepest wrath, because his anger is the effervescence of his compassion. Bernanos happened to be in Spain in the early days of the Civil War, and viewed as flesh and blood the ideals and passions which had provoked it. It inspired him to thoughts on the nature of Christian civilization which spring from the very deepest human emotion, unlike anything else we have as yet seen expressed on this and all the subjects to which it gives rise. The many themes of this remarkable book are correlated by deep and wide inspiration, re-stating the social order in terms of its natural limitations, and finding the ideal to be—Christianity.



A DIARY OF MY TIMES



BY THE SAME WRITER

The Diary of a Country Priest

GEORGES BERNANOS

# A DIARY OF MY TIMES

Translated from the French by  
PAMELA MORRIS

BORISWOOD: LONDON

Printed in Guernsey, C.I., British Isles by the  
Star and Gazette Ltd., for BORISWOOD LIMITED,  
59 Frith Street, Soho Square, London, W.1.

First published September 1938

Durgam Chh Municipal Library,  
Najini Tal,

मुद्रगम चख नुनसिपल लाइब्रेरी  
नजीनताल

Class No, (विभाग) .....

Book No, (पुस्तक) .....

Author's Name .....

5055

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LES GRANDS CIMETIERES SOUS LA LUNE  
[PARIS 1938]

A DIARY OF MY TIMES  
[LONDON 1938]





## PREFACE

by the Author

Being a reply to an article by the Rev. Father du Passage, S. J., headed 'A Nightmare in Majorca'.

Father du Passage has been kind enough to criticize my book, as I think unjustly. May I add that when I say 'unjustly', the word does not mean 'inopportune', as so often seems to be the case.

'A nightmare in Majorca!' Why nightmare? I didn't dream anything.

I said what I knew. I do not say everything that I know. Therefore I had better not be challenged, for some witnesses are irrefutable.

I am in no way out to create a scandal. But when so many Catholics try to excuse, or even justify, one of the most atrocious civil wars that has ever been known, in the name of a 'Lesser-Evil' policy, it is not much to ask that a denunciation of cowards and rogues should be treated with the same indulgence. My reaction may have sounded violent, but at least it may have some chance of being effective against the kind of dishonourable re-shuffling of which we have now seen an example in Austria.

Obviously it can always be said that mystic zeal for an anti-Russian crusade, daily being more cynically exploited by nationalist egotism everywhere, will end by summoning back to Christianity the nations of Europe. Recent experience in Berlin and Vienna hardly confirms this point of view. So far, the totalitarian state seems to have been fairly indifferent to

the blessings of a Coronation service, and is unlikely to be so easily dethronable as the ancient kings in their own right.

Once more I repeat that the population of Majorca contained scarcely any Communists. During the months before the *Pronunciamento*, not a single attempt had been made either against persons or property in the whole island, so that the massacres which I denounce cannot have had the character of reprisals. Though I did not actually see what happened in districts invaded by the Moors, the *Rercio*, or the Fascist Legions—and so did not write about it, in spite of all the bad examples given me by the incense-swinging partisans of Right and Left—I am not quite simple enough to believe that those repressions were any milder. It would be either foolish or rather impudent at present to be in the least surprised at the reserve with which such facts are being treated, by numbers of orthodox witnesses. The traditional moral theology of the Society of Jesus is too indulgent and too humane to wish to insist that any publicist on either side should bear open witness which would automatically exclude him from the columns of all his party's newspapers. What do you take me for?

It was not so much the actual killings in Majorca which disgusted me, as the fact that they were publicly approved by the great majority of secular priests, monks and nuns on that unhappy island.

It is, of course, admirable that a priest should assist those condemned to death. I merely suggest that, even with common criminals a prison chaplain is usually bound by a certain reserve. He would, for instance, consider it improper to display himself before the victim, or that victim's family and friends, arm-in-arm with the prosecuting counsel, or the executioner.

A question of tact. And since in any case in Palma the proportion of 'Reds' put to death with all due ceremony was as one against twenty or thirty mown down along the road-side by official killers, it seems to me His Lordship the Archbishop of Majorca might logically have extended his solicitude to these as well.

Do not suspect me of believing in angelic intervention. It is for theologians to decide whether or not there is such a thing as a Holy war, a war for Holiness. But if circumstances ever impose it upon us, it will not have to be fought by theologians. It will be fought by us, or by our children. We have therefore the right at least to hope that it will be fought according to the rules of human decency and honour.

The Basque Catholics have not been forgiven for offering, in 1936, their adherence to a government which had in its ranks a number of assassins. People remain blind to the fact that revolt suddenly deprived the Republican authorities of the help of the army and police, of the necessary forces of repression. Therefore they could do nothing against the mob. And anyhow, the problem for the conscience of the crusading soldier was made even simpler. He could not—without hypocrisy—disapprove of that bloody and official repression which is one of the aspects of Holy war.

The military government of Majorca always remained in close relationship with General Franco. I can even affirm that in February 1937, at the time when the rhythm of preventative executions was slowing down, this Chief Crusader wrote to a subordinate: 'Have you all gone to sleep in Palma, or what?'

General Franco's method of purgation is by now a subject of common gossip.

I think that certainly I am in entire agreement with Father du Passage in matters of principle, but it is better to leave nothing in the shadow. If the Basque Catholics had ever thought in 1932 that one day their Republican loyalty would be stigmatized as a crime so foul that a crowd of Spanish Bishops and Jesuits publicly approved their executioners, perhaps they would have kept clear of the civil war.

Why should we be forbidden to point out this fact not only to those Communist comrades whom the Jocist boys insist on taking to hear sermons, but even to the Jocist boys themselves? There are certainly far too many Catholics in France who applaud or glorify terrorist methods, of which the abject efficacy is apparent both in Austria and Spain. After all, the flesh is weak, and I cannot think I am doing wrong in warning a number of over-hasty good people against the temptations of civil war.

Though we may pardon the excesses of individuals, surely we cannot tolerate mass executions without sentence, or the shooting of prisoners and of the wounded. Is it so hard to reach agreement on these points?

In plain words: I think that whoever comes to us with the open suggestion that young French or English workmen, even Communists, whose fathers fought with us in the trenches on the Somme or at Verdun, should be purged out—ought to be discouraged here and now.

That goes without saying?

Yes, but it goes even better by being said. . . .

*Toulon, July 1938*

GEORGES BERNANOS

## NOTE

Georges Bernanos is fifty. His career as a writer has been brief. It only began in 1926, and was continued in a series of novels; then came *The Diary of a Country Priest* which has earned him an established and international reputation.

Bernanos is profoundly French. His family, which came originally from Spain, stuck roots long ago in the soil of more than one French province. He himself is ardently attached to all that is ancient and great in France. He is a Catholic and royalist. He married a girl whose family claims kindred with Joan of Arc, a grand-niece of Davout. He has six children, three sons and three daughters.

Bernanos enjoys laughing and gossiping with his friends. Flashes of sudden wrath and tenderness, irony and merriment, come and go in him, lighting his remarkable blue eyes.

To express his character one must insist on emphasizing the two great sources from which it springs: the Catholic Church, and a sense of Honour. The riches of this dual inspiration have given to his writing its significant unity. That point of view is the measure of all his judgements, and it is because to him Christian truth and loyalty to friends are absolute values, that betrayal finds in him no mercy.

He is conscious of the duty to keep intact and to enrich that tradition of ancient France which his fathers and teachers have handed down. Those who by their ignorance, cowardice or stupidity, impair this inheritance, are warned that he will always oppose them.

His voice has notes of the deepest wrath, but only when his tenderness for the thing he loves is outraged; his anger is the effervescence of his compassion. That is the meaning of this book which plumbs such depths that its meaning is universal.

Nevertheless, in order to heighten this universal appeal, the publishers have considered it advisable to delete certain passages in the book solely concerned with French politics and personalities which could be of no interest to the great majority of readers in this country, and would give a 'local' impression which is quite unjustified. For Bernanos has a message for all, in the same way as the protagonist of *The Diary of a Country Priest*, who, though seemingly addressing merely Madame la Comtesse or Scraphita Dumouchel, was in reality addressing the whole world.

For the same reason, the translation is in parts very 'free'. Adaptations, rather than equivalents, have had occasionally to be found. Never to twist the words from their meaning, but in order to give them this universal expression, the translating of Bernanos is of necessity a very arduous task and a great satisfaction.

When the Spanish war broke out, Bernanos had been living for more than a year in Palma, Majorca, in very difficult material circumstances, and suffering from the after-effects of a motor-cycle accident. He was writing two books at the same time, *A Crime*, and *The Diary of a Country Priest*. It was in Majorca that Bernanos watched civil war, or rather—since the island fell almost at once into the hands of the Fascists—watched terrorism eating its slow way into this little middle-class and peasant community, slyly aided and abetted by those who might have been protecting

it. With the keen penetration of a novelist, he realized that a state of terror is more easily reached than people think. Terrorism, he says, really began to appal him when he perceived that he was getting used to it; since this kind of terrorism can cloak itself skilfully in the guise of surface law and order. Later, Bernanos returned to France. And there, at home, especially among Conservatives, he encountered this same atmosphere of panic which explains and almost appears to authorize, in the name of a threatened public order, any kind of preventative measure, any hatred or any lie. So Bernanos wrote this book.

He settled at Toulon where again he was taken seriously ill. But one thing alone caused him anxiety—his fear of not being able to say what he had to say. He wrote to liberate his soul, and at the same time has also succeeded in freeing the souls of others oppressed by these same impostures.

Any reader who likes to take the trouble to read the beginning a second time, will perceive the importance of that psychological analysis which probes so wide and deep into the sub-soil of instinct, laying bare the causes of massive and terrible reactions, freely spontaneous in appearance, closely determined in reality by obscure forgotten deviations from the normal trend of social life, ancient, half-conscious betrayals which still burden the souls of men.

Little by little, with stubborn application, the book was finished, to the formidable accompaniment of great European events—the war continuing in Spain, the ruin of Austria. With almost childish, sometimes heroic obstinacy, Bernanos set himself to the task of safeguarding his independence as a writer. He omitted everything which might have cast the least shadow of doubt on the integrity of his evidence.



He asserted nothing of which he was in any way uncertain, incessantly scrupulous only to implicate himself. And nobody has yet dared to cast any doubt upon the veracity of a single detail in this book, and much less has anyone dared try to refute it. On the other hand the note of tragic reality, audible in this long cry of alarm, instantly formed a fervent group of enthusiastic readers.

However, the book has been attacked in the original French. Bernanos resented only Catholic criticism. He even felt it necessary to make an answer, in order to clear up any doubt as to his loyalty to the Catholic Church, which he will never allow to be questioned.

He has now left France again, this time for South America. And this second departure serves to mark his complete disinterestedness; an independence akin to the spirit of adventure.

## A DIARY OF MY TIMES



## I

✎ ✎ Had I any inclination for the task which now I undertake, I should doubtless lose heart before I had finished it, because I should not believe in it any longer. I believe only where I pay dearly. I have done no passably decent job in this world which did not at first seem to me useless—absurdly useless, useless to the point of nausea. My secret demon is called: ‘What’s the use?’

At one time I believed in contempt. A very scholarly state of mind, which soon turns to eloquence, as in dropsy blood turns to water. Reading Barrès<sup>1</sup> at too early an age had given me some illusions on the matter. Unfortunately the contempt of Barrès—or shall we say the organ which secretes it?—seems to suffer from perpetual retention. A scornful man must needs probe very deeply to gauge his true rancour. Peace to Barrès, author of *Leurs Figures*! The man we loved entered into death with the eyes of a proud child, and the tight, pathetic smile of an impecunious young gentlewoman who will never find a husband.

✎ ✎ Why the name of Barrès, on the threshold of this book? Why that of the gentle Toulet<sup>2</sup>, on the first page of the *Soleil de Satan*<sup>3</sup>? Because to-night, as on

<sup>1</sup> Short explanatory Notes to all numbered references will be found on pages 267 to 268.

that other September evening, 'full of still light', I shrink from the first step towards you, oh shrouded faces! For once that first step is taken, I know nothing will impede me; whatever happens I shall go on to the end of my task, through days and days all so alike that I don't count them, that they seem as though cut off from the rest of my life. Which in truth they are.

I am no author. The sight alone of a blank sheet wearies my spirit, and the sheer physical isolation imposed by such work is so distasteful to me that I avoid it as much as I can. I sit scribbling in cafés, at the risk of being taken for a drunkard—and that no doubt is what I should really be, if our mighty Governments did not burden so ruthlessly with taxation the cup that cheers. Failing this, I swallow white sweetish coffees, the whole year round, together with an occasional drowned fly.

I write at café tables because I cannot long be deprived of the human face and voice, which I have tried to render with dignity. Let clever folk suppose that I sit 'observing' my fellow-men. I observe nothing. Observation never leads to much. All his life M. Bourget<sup>4</sup> 'observed' society people, yet still he clung to his first impression of them, as an industrious little school-teacher athirst for Mayfair and English gentility. His sententious dukes remain sollicitors, and when he strives to make them 'come alive', they appear as witless as greyhounds.

✍ ✍ I scribble in cafés, just as I used to scribble in railway carriages, in order not to be taken in by

figments of my own imagination, in order at a glance to re-discover, in the unknown person opposite, my own fair measure of joy or sorrow. No—I'm not an 'author'. Had I been a real one, I never should have waited till I was forty before I published my first book. For you'll grant, no doubt, that at twenty I had as good a chance as the next man of turning out novels. Not that I decline to be called an author out of some kind of inverted snobbery. I respect the job which—next to God—has enabled me to keep my wife and children. And I humbly endure the shame of having so far only spattered with ink the face of injustice, whose incessant outrages are my zest for life. A vocation is always a call to action—*vocatus*—and every call must be passed on. Those to whom I call are obviously few. They will alter in nothing the ways of the world. Yet it is for them—for them that I was born.

✎ ✎ Unknown brothers, tired companions, one day we shall all stand together at the gates of the Kingdom of God. A battered, scarecrow company, white from dusty roads; dear rugged faces from which I was never able to wipe the sweat, eyes that have seen good and evil, finished their task, taken upon themselves both life and death—eyes which never have surrendered! Old friends that is how I shall find you, just as I dreamed of you, when I was a boy. For in setting out, I ran to find you. At the first turn of the highroad, I would have caught sight of your eternal camp-fires. My childhood was yours and nobody else's. Perhaps on one day—a day I remember—I may have been

worthy of walking at the head of your stern company. May God never let me see again the byways where I lost your tracks, at that hour when boyhood's shadows lengthen, and the essence of death, creeping through our veins, mingles at last with the heart's blood.

Leaves of Artois at the very end of autumn, tawny and fragrant as wild beasts, paths rotting in November rain, huge prancing clouds, clamour in the skies, still waters. . . . Home I came and swung open the gate, thrust my feet, with boots rusted in slush, up to the fire. It would be morning long before the shadows of dreams, still scarcely shaped, memberless embryos, had slipped back into the silences of my spirit—its most secret haunts.

Mouchette and Domisan, Cénabre, Chantal<sup>5</sup>, and you, you alone of all my creatures of whose face I sometimes caught a glimpse, yet to whom I dared not give a name—dear Curé<sup>6</sup> of an imaginary Ambri-court. . . . Did you guide me in those days, you people? Are you still guiding me?

Believe me, I know all the vanity of such yearning for the past. I know my life is already heavy with the dead. But none are so dead as the little boy that once was me. And yet, when the hour strikes, it is he who shall walk again at the head of my life, gather around him all my mistaken years, to the very last of them, and like a young leader of veterans, rallying his scattered company, he shall enter first the House of my Father. After all, I'll have the right to speak in his name. But there!—we cannot speak in the name of childhood, for then we should have to speak as children. That is the forgotten tongue which I,

fool, keep seeking from book to book. As though such words could ever be written, or ever had been! And yet . . . sometimes a lost echo returns to me. And it is *that* makes you listen, my brothers all over the world, who by chance or boredom have happened to open one of my books. A strange notion to write for those who disdain all writing! A bitter irony to strive to convince and persuade, when my deepest belief is that the only world which may yet be redeemed, is the world of children, of heroes and of martyrs.

✎ ✎ 'I have sworn to move you either to anger or love, and I don't care which.' I said this in the days of 'The Great Fear', seven long years back. Now I no longer care much about moving anyone, least of all to wrath. For the wrath of the Stupid has always saddened me; but to-day I might almost say it terrifies. The whole world is full of the din of it. What else was to be expected? The Stupid asked nothing better than not to have to understand anything, and they even used to get together and try not to understand, because the last thing of which man is capable is to be malicious and stupid all by himself—a mysterious state reserved presumably for the damned. Without understanding, they formed spontaneously into herds, not according to any particular affinities—these were too weak—but in obedience to the petty function, which swallowed up the whole of their small lives, allotted them by birth or chance.

The middle classes have almost a monopoly in the fabrication of true stupidity; since the upper classes



specialize in a brand of entirely useless foolishness, a luxury foolishness; whereas the lower only achieve rough, and sometimes admirable, attempts at the purely bestial.

It was madly rash, as M. Maurice Barrès predicted,<sup>7</sup> to uproot the Stupid. A stupid colony firmly attached to its native soil like a shoal of barnacles to a rock, can appear inoffensive, and even provide the State and Industry with valuable raw material. For the Stupid are soaked in habits of mind and ready-made notions. When parted from their environment, they retain, between two tightly closed valves, the stagnant waters in which they grow. But modern life not only whirls the Stupid from place to place, but harries them into a kind of frenzy. The huge machine, working at top speed, sucks them up in their thousands, scatters them all over the earth at the mercy of its colossal winds. No society but ours has ever consumed these unfortunates in such vast quantities, devouring them while their shell was still soft, not even allowing them to mature, knowing of course that with age and that degree of experience to which the Stupid may hope to attain, they grow a stupid wisdom, which makes them tough.

I feel I must apologize for so naturally resorting to metaphors. I would wish to set down these reflections in words as simple as they. Of course they would not be understood. To begin to perceive a truth which daily is becoming more evident, needs an effort to which not many of us, nowadays, feel equal. Admit that simplicity repels you, makes you

uncomfortable. What you call 'simple' is the very opposite. You're easy-going, you're not simple. An easy-going conscience is also the most involved. Why should it not be the same of the mind? In the course of centuries our Masters, the Masters of the human race, have cleared for us the great high-roads of thought leading from one truth to another, the roads royal. But of what use are royal roads, when the gait of your mind is devious? Sometimes by chance you may happen to find yourself on one of them, but you cannot recognize it.

Even as anguish would pinch our hearts on a night, when emerging from our labyrinth of trenches, we suddenly felt the firm soil underfoot of one of the old roads of the past, now almost hidden by moss: a dead road, a road full of silence which had once been alive with the steps of men.

Yes, the wrath of the Stupid fills the earth. You may laugh, but it will spare nothing and nobody; it is incapable of mercy. Of course Right or Left wing dogmatists, whose profession it is, will go on classifying the Stupid, will enumerate the different kinds, define each group according to the specific craze and interests of the individuals which compose it, their own particular ideology. For such clever folk it's child's play. But those classifications have so little in common with reality, that with use their number is ruthlessly curtailed.

Clearly a multiplicity of 'parties' is most flattering to the vanity of the Stupid. It gives them the illusion of having chosen for themselves. Any shop assistant

will tell you that crowds at a sale, lured by a display of latest novelties, having haggled their fill, and driven the assistants half crazy, end by going back to the first counter.

We have seen the birth and death of many parties, because for certain newspapers it is the only method by which to retain their readers. Unfortunately the natural mistrustfulness of the Stupid makes this subdividing somewhat precarious. The troubled herd keeps on re-forming itself. The moment that circumstances, and especially the tactics of an election, seem to impose strategical alliances, they instantly forget the distinctions which in any case they only achieved with the greatest difficulty. Of their own volition, they divide into two large groups, and so the mental effort required is reduced to a minimum: all they need do is weigh heavily against the adversary, and make a little cross in the corner of a card. Complicated designations, such as 'Royalist' or 'Republican' have always been accepted with some misgiving. Clerical or anti-clerical is more attractive: the two words have no deeper meaning than 'for' or 'against' priests, and anyway the prefix 'anti' is not the sole prerogative of either side; if the Left is anti-clerical, the Right is anti-masonic and anti-semitic.

No doubt those who run the Press, and who by now have worn these slogans nearly threadbare, would have me admit that I merely consider both sets of ideas equally repulsive. Alas! I know only too well how much a lad of twenty can give of himself, of his soul's substance, to these vulgar contraptions of party spirit. The lavish soul of youth! Sometimes it's poured out into brothels. Like those iridescent flies decked in

sky-blue and gold, painted with greater art than stained glass, first loves come swooping round the charnel-house. . . .

You see, I don't even believe in the relative advantage of conspiracies of ignorance, and foregone conclusions. The indispensable condition which must be fulfilled before entering into action, is to know oneself, to have truly gauged oneself. And all these folk merely get together to pile up in common the few reasons they possess for supposing themselves better than everyone else. Of what use, therefore, can be the cause they insist on serving? Take for instance our meagre herd of bigots, maintained at such enormous expense by a special literature printed in its thousands all over the world, and which is simply made to repel all well-meaning agnostics. God knows the price the rest of us have to pay for it! I have no feeling against the narrow-minded, all I want is not to be deafened with stories of their supposed simplicity. Any priest will tell you—if he is honest—that no species is further removed than theirs from the spirit of childhood, its supernatural vision, its generosity. The narrow-minded are the tricksters of faith. And those plump, literary canons, who suckle these larvae with honey plundered from the flowers of the soul—they are not so innocent, either!

❧ ❧ The wrath of the Stupid fills the world.

Easy enough to see that when Providence made the Stupid naturally sedentary, she had good reasons for so doing. But now your cars, your express trains, your aeroplanes, transport them here and there like

lightning. Once each little town had its two or three 'stupid sets' of which the famous 'Rice and Prunes' described in Daudet's *Tartarin in the Alps* was the perfect example. Your profound mistake is to fancy that stupidity is harmless, or even that there are harmless forms of stupidity. Stupidity has no more vital force than a canonade of '36, yet once you get it going, it smashes everything. We all know what can result from the patient, vigilant hatred of mediocrities. And yet we fling the seed of it to the winds! For now whilst modern machinery permits the interchanging of the Stupid, not merely from town to town, and province to province, but from country to country, or even from continent to continent—the democracies are still borrowing from these creatures the stuff of which their public opinions are made. Thus, thanks to the care of a huge Publicity, working day and night on a few arbitrarily chosen themes, the 'Prunes and Rice' rivalry assumes universal proportions of which M. Alphonse Daudet certainly never dreamed.

But who reads *Tartarin* to-day? Let us therefore recall how this gentle poet of Provence, who was so often exalted beyond himself by the consummation of pain and his gift of pity, gathers together at a mountain inn a dozen or so stupid people. The glacier is at hand, suspended in vast skies. Nobody bothers with it. After a few days feigned heartiness, mistrust and boredom, the poor devils find a way of satisfying both their gregarious instincts and the muffled spite which frets them. The Constipated party insist on prunes, for dessert. The Relaxed naturally favour rice. From that instant personal disagreements die down, harmony reigns between the

members of each hostile group. Easy enough to imagine in the wings, some smart guy either in the rice or prune trade, suggesting to these miserable beings a Belief in keeping with the condition of their bowels. But such a character is not needed. Stupidity invents nothing, and makes perfect use of everything which chance bestows to achieve its purpose, the purpose of stupidity. And by some phenomenon of even greater mystery, you will see it, alas, adjust itself to the men, circumstances, doctrines, that have provoked its monstrous besotting faculty. At St. Helena, Napoleon boasted that he had known how to make use of the Stupid. But in the long run it was the Stupid that made use of Napoleon. Not only, as you might imagine, by becoming 'bonapartists'. Little by little they adjusted his vision to the taste of modern democracies, creating that silly kind of 'patriotism' which still can stir their glands to violence: a patriotism our ancestors never knew, whose blatant insolence, with bases of hate, mistrust and envy, is expressed—though not always equally well—in certain songs and war poetry.

Arc you tired of all this about the Stupid? Well—I'm tired, too. But of one thing I must first convince you: that you'll never defeat the Stupid by shot nor steel nor poison-gas. For they invented neither shot, nor steel, nor gas, but they know how to use everything which preserves them from the only effort of which they are quite incapable, that of thinking for themselves. They would far rather kill than have to think, unfortunately. And you go supplying the machinery! Machinery has been created for their benefit. Until you produce the thinking-machine they await and

must have—which is on its way—they'll manage all right with a killing-machine: it fits them, like a glove. We have industrialized war, to bring it within the reach of all. It certainly *is* now.

If not, I defy you to explain how—by what miracle—it has become so easy to make a soldier out of the first shop-keeper, insurance-clerk, lawyer or parson that comes along? The same here as in Germany, as in England, as in Japan. It's so easy: you spread out your apron and a hero flops into it. I say nothing against the dead. But once upon a time the vocation of a soldier was the most honoured after that of a priest, and barely yielded to the latter in dignity. So surely it is a little odd that our capitalistic civilization, which doesn't exactly encourage the spirit of sacrifice, should dispose of as many army-men as uniforms produced by its factories. . . .

Such army-men as surely were never seen before! You pick 'em out of their offices or work-shops, where they're sitting ever so quiet. You give 'em a ticket to Hell, stamped by their recruiting-station, and a new pair of usually non-waterproof trench-boots. The final send-off, the country's last good-bye to its brave lads, comes in the form of a pop-eyed glare from the re-enlisted N.C.O. put in charge of the Stores, who calls them b——, then off they hurry to the station, slightly soused, but really worried in case they might miss the train to Hell, just as though they were going out to a family picnic, on Sunday. They're getting out at Hell this time. One year, two years, four years, until the circular ticket, issued by the Government has expired, they will tear all over Hell in a drizzle of lead and steel, careful not to break into their

iron ration without permission, or on the alert to scrounge the next man's first-aid outfit, which they never received. On the day of the 'attack', with a bullet in their bellies, they amble like young partridges to the dressing-station, collapse perspiring on a stretcher and wake up in hospital, from whence they are shoved out a little later as meekly as ever they went in, with a fatherly thump between the shoulders from the old Major—such a good sort. . . .

Then back to Hell, in a carriage with no window-panes, munching cheese from station to station, imbibing sour wine, conning the cabalistic way-bill in the dirty lamp-light, full of misgivings about being on the right track. . . .

On the day of Victory? Why, on the day of Victory, a chap hopes to be able to get out of uniform. . . .

Actually, he doesn't, for the well-known reason that 'Armistice isn't Peace', and you must give them time to realize this. About a year was considered necessary. But a week would have sufficed. A week would have sufficed to prove to the soldiers of the Great War that 'Victory' is a thing to be viewed respectfully from afar, like the Colonel's daughter, or Napolcon's Tomb; that if the 'men who won the War' want to be allowed to go on living, they'd better forget about it. So back they went to their work-shops and offices, still as good as gold. And some even had the luck to find in the pockets of a pre-war pair of pants a dozen meal-tickets of their old kip—sixpence a meal, it used to be. But the new management wouldn't take them.

Those folk were Saints, you say. No, I assure you they weren't saints. They were merely resigned.



There is in every man a huge capacity of resignation. Mankind is naturally resigned. Which is why we last. Because you see, if it wasn't for that, the thinking creatures we are couldn't have borne to be the playthings of life. The last of us, thousands of years ago, would have smashed his skull against the walls of his cave, denying his soul. Yet Saints are not resigned, at least in the accepted sense. If they suffer in silence the forms of injustice which arouse inferior men, it is the better to fling against the brazen face of true injustice the full vigour of their great spirits. Our rages, daughters of despair, creep and squirm like worms. Prayer is the only form of revolt which remains upright.

Man is resigned by nature. Especially modern man, because of the extreme loneliness of a society that recognizes between its members no longer any links but those of money. Yet we should be wrong in thinking such resignation turns him into a harmless creature. Rather it concentrates in him poison enough to make him ready—when the time comes—for any cruelty. The peoples of our democracies are but a rabble held in perpetual check by the invisible Speaker, by voices calling from all sides of the world, voices churning your guts, twisting your nerves because they endeavour to speak the very language of your longing, of your hate, and of your fear. Parliamentary democracies, though the most excitable, are lacking in temperament. Those under dictatorships have a fire in their bellies.

❧ ❧ The wrath of the Stupid fills the world. And

in their anger they are fretted by the thought of redemption, for that is the basis of all human hope. It was this same instinct which drove Europe against Asia at the time of the Crusades. But in those days Europe was Christian, and the Stupid themselves belonged to Christianity. And though a Christian may be many things, a brute, a fool or a madman, he can never be entirely stupid. I am speaking of Christians born Christians, Christians by right, Christians of Christianity. Because such Christians, growing up in the freedom and fullness of Christian soil, consummate one by one, in sun and rain, each season of their lives. God preserve me from comparing them to those sapless bulbs which priests grow in little flower-pots, sheltered from the wind!

For a Christian of Christianity the New Testament is not just an anthology of which one reads a bit every Sunday in a prayer-book. The New Testament is law, habit of life, pain and even pleasure; for the simple hope of man, as well as the fruits of his loins, are blessed therein. Make fun of it as much as you choose. I know very little that's worth while, but I know what it means to hope for the Kingdom of Heaven, and that's something, I promise you! You don't believe me? What of it? That hope may yet return to its people. We may breathe it all together on one morning of our days, in the honey-sweetness of dawn. You're not interested? Who cares? You who will refuse then to receive it in your hearts, will yet know of the Advent, thus: those who look away from you to-day, or snigger when your back is turned, will come straight up to you, with the eyes of

manhood. Thus you will know, I say, that your time is up!

✍ ✍ The Stupid are fretted by the idea of redemption. Of course if you went and asked the first one you met, he'd say he'd never thought of such a thing, and wasn't even quite clear what you were talking about. For the Stupid possess no mental gadget with which to probe into themselves. They can only explore their surface. Yes, but though the blunt hoe of a nigger merely scrapes the soil sufficiently to plant a little canary-seed, the earth may be rich and capable of greater harvests. Besides, what do we know of any mediocre person until we have observed him amongst other mediocrities of his race, communing in pleasure and horror and hate? True, each mediocrity appears well armoured against any mediocrity of another kind. But the gigantic efforts of our democracies have finally broken down this obstacle. The prodigious, the unique feat has been achieved: the security of the mediocre has been destroyed. Security which seemed part of mediocrity—its very substance. Mediocrities are not necessarily stultified. The first step was to stultify them. Vaguely aware of what they lacked, and of the relentless current bearing them to fates unfathomable, they shut themselves up in habits, hereditary or acquired, like the famous American who crossed Niagara Falls in a barrel. Now the barrel is smashed, and the river-banks flash by, like lightning.

✍ ✍ A village notary, two centuries ago, no doubt

hardly considered his birth-place as durable as Carthage or Memphis, but at the rate things are moving, by to-morrow he will feel about as safe as in a bed on a windy night in the market-place. The myth of Progress has indeed served our democracies well. But a century or so was required before the Stupid, reared in fixedness for so many generations, saw in this myth beyond the thrill of a new game. The Stupid are sedentary, but they have always loved travel-books. Just imagine such a travel-maniac in the quiet of his bedroom, suddenly seeing the floor move! He rushes to the window, flings it open, gets a blast of steam in his face, and finds he's 'off', though the word 'off' hardly applies here. For since the eyes of modern man can rest on no fixed point—the notorious reason for sea-sickness—the poor devil doesn't really feel as though he were going anywhere. His worries are just the same, I mean, though they seem more numerous owing to this particular perspective. But there's no real new way of making love, and no new way of going West.

This is all simple, very simple. To-morrow it will be simpler still. So simple that it will be no longer possible to write intelligently of the misfortune of mankind, for the immediate cause will hardly be worth analysis. The early symptoms of a deadly disease provide brilliant lectures for professors of medicine, but every mortal illness finally achieves the same symptom: the heart stops. Not much to be said about that. Society will die no other way. You may still be discussing whys and wherefores, when the blood has already ceased to circulate. The parable is exact enough, for the reform of institutions will come too

late, when the deception of the people is irreparable, when the heart of the people is broken.

☞ ☞ Don't touch the Stupid! The Angel of the Modern World might have inscribed this in letters of gold on the Frontal Arch—if the Modern World had an angel. To let loose the Wrath of the Stupid, one need but set them against each other, and imperial democracies at the height of their wealth and power couldn't resist the temptation. They have run it. The myth of Progress was no doubt the only one in which millions of men could commune, the only one to satisfy their lust for gain, their shallow 'morality' and the ancient inherited instinct of 'fairness'.

After all, the head of a glass-blowing works, last century, who according to undeniable statistics, systematically thinned out whole districts for the requirements of his trade, must have had, like each one of us, his moments of depression. Though you half strangle yourself in a silk cravat, flaunt a button-hole as large as a saucer, and dine at the Tuileries—still there must be days when the 'inner voice' can be heard. . . . And mind you, the great-grandsons of those gentlemen are some of our nicest young men to-day, smart, clever, sporting, and generally well-connected. Many of them call themselves 'royalists', and talk of the family arms with the triumphant thrust of the chin of a descendant of Godefroy de Bouillon<sup>a</sup> asserting his rights over the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Nasty little frauds! They have one excuse: their social sense is lacking. There was none to inherit. Money-crimes have an abstract quality. History is

laden with the victims of gold, but their remains are odourless.

✿ ✿ Herewith another example of the magic metal that wards off the effects of putrefaction. If a half-witted cow-herd kills a couple of shepherdesses after violating them, chronicles record his name, make of his name an insult, a name that stinks. Whilst those 'Gentlemen of the Trade of Nantes', the great slave traffickers, as the Senator of Guadelope respectfully names them, were able to pile up the bodies, and yet all that black flesh exhales throughout the centuries but a faint aroma of verbena and Spanish tobacco.

'These captains of slave-ships seem to have been men of noble bearing', pursues the honourable Senator. 'They wore a wig, as though at court, a sword at their side, shoes with silver buckles, an embroidered doublet with lace jabot and cuffs.' 'Such a trade'—concludes this journalist—'in no way dishonoured either those who practised nor those who subsidized it. Indeed there were few financiers or well-to-do families who were not slave-owners, in one way or another. The shipping magnates who financed these remote and expensive expeditions, divided the capital involved, into a number of shares, and these shares, which as a rule paid huge dividends, constituted for all heads of families a much sought after investment.'

The captains of the slave-ships were anxious to be deserving of the shareholders' trust, and performed their duties most conscientiously, as the following extract—chosen among many others of the same kind, from an interesting record on the matter—goes to prove:

'Yesterday at eight o'clock we lashed down the most mutinous of our negroes by the arms and feet, flat on their bellies on the captain's bridge, and had them flogged. And in addition (that they might the better know their faults) we pulled strips of skin from off their buttocks. Having drawn the blood from their backsides with whippings and scarifications, we rubbed in the wounds a concoction of gunpowder, lemon-juice, brine and pimento, all pounded together with another drug which the ship's surgeon added, to prevent gangrene and moreover that their backsides might burn continuously, as they lay to starboard, exposed to the wind.'

Here is a good example of the tact and discretion displayed in the old days, when it was needful to explain anything to the Stupid.

Whereas to-day the Italian Press is taking great pains to justify the wholesale destruction of Abyssinia. This understanding of the Spirit of Power is too much altogether for the Stupid, because it obliged them to concentrate exhaustingly in order to see things from Mussolini's point of view. Il Duce stands before those villages, in which the defenders have managed to destroy all life, even animal and insect life, and then turns to the descendants of the 'Gentlemen of the Trade of Nantes', who have come with their good ladies and daughters, and sons preparing for college. He's a little flushed and uneasy at first, but soon he becomes eloquent, speaks of the Burden of Greatness, from time immemorial, of Power and of the Empire. The kind ladies and gentlemen eye each other uncomfortably. What an idea to bring us here! So depressing! Worse than a cemetery, and my wife gets

so easily upset, with her high blood-pressure. All this fuss about a few niggers! Why my people did very well out of niggers at one time—just like this gentleman—without talking like a history-book. Is the concern going to pay? That's what matters.

✎ ✎ The conception of greatness has never been a sop to the Stupid conscience. Greatness is a perpetual striving, and the mediocre possess no wisdom enabling them to realize, that irresistible thrust. (They can only conceive of it dead, and as though petrified into History.) But the notion of 'Progress' supplies just what they want. Greatness entails great sacrifice. Progress drifts unaided down the current of massed experience. Oppose no resistance beyond that of your own weight and all will be well: something like the collaboration of a drowned dog with the stream that bears it away.

When the old-time master-glass-blower, after a final stocktaking, worked out the exact figure of his profits, he must sometimes have given a thought to the humble assistant now coughing up the last of his lungs in the ashes of his grate, with the mangy cat dozing at his elbow, and the wretched babe with a face like an old woman, wailing in its cot.

Which recalls to one's mind the celebrated remark of an American boss to the reporter who is being shown round the factory, and is having a drink with his host before catching the train. The reporter suddenly exclaims: 'What the hell do you do with your old workmen? I haven't caught sight of one that looked to be more than fifty. . . .' Pause on the part of



the Boss, who slowly drains his glass. 'Have a cigar,' he says, 'and we'll take a walk round the cemetery.'

The master-glass-blower must have taken a walk round the cemetery too, now and again. And though he may have said no prayers—for the better-classes in those days were all free-thinkers—he no doubt behaved with respect and even paused for meditation.

Why not? I'm quite serious. People who don't know me well often regard me as a fanatic and pamphletist. A polemist—I insist once again—is amusing until the age of twenty, tolerable up to thirty, impossible round fifty, and obscene beyond. The propagandist itch in an old man seems to me a kind of eroticism. That cold excitement of senile fanatics. . . .

Far from 'working myself up', I spend my time trying to understand, which is the only remedy against the kind of delirious hysteria into which finally descend the unhappy folk who can barely take a step without catching their foot in some injustice, carefully hidden in the grass, like a trap. I try to understand. I think I do my best to love. True, I am not what is termed an optimist. Optimism has always seemed to me the cunning alibi of egoists, anxious to cover up their state of chronic self-satisfaction. They are optimists in order to avoid pitying other men and their misfortune.

Yet pity is a vexed question. Those of delicate sensibilities are too prone to estimate the depth of this sentiment by its convulsive manifestations in certain pitiful people. Whilst such convulsions express a revolt against pain somewhat dangerous for the

patient, as they are liable to combine in the same revulsion both suffering and sufferer. We have all met those hyper-sensitive ladies who cannot bear to see a wounded beetle without instantly crushing it under-foot, with shudders of disgust most unflattering to the poor beetle who would doubtless have preferred to be allowed to creep quietly into its hole and get better.

Certain paradoxes in modern history have become clear to me, now that I allow for one very obvious factor: modern man has a heart of flint and flaccid guts. Maybe after the Deluge the world will belong to monster jellyfish.

Possibly, therefore, certain types are instinctively on their guard against pity, because they very wisely mistrust themselves and the brutality of their reactions.

❧ ❧ For centuries the Stupid have meekly accepted traditional teachings of the Church on matters which to them really seemed insoluble. That Pain should or should not be of expiatory value, that Pain might even be held dear—who cares for the far-fetched notions of a very few on the matter, when Common Sense (and the Church) admits that sensible people should avoid it by all manner of means? Not even one of the Stupid has ever thought of denying the universal character of Pain; but universal pain used to be discreet. Now it can make itself heard with the same powerful mechanism as pleasure or hate. The very same folk who systematically restricted social relations down to mere printed forms announcing births, marriages and deaths, in order to economize their tiny stock of fellow-feeling, can no longer open

the paper or turn on the wireless without hearing of some catastrophe. And to shake off the effects of such an obsession, it is no longer sufficient to go to mass once a week, and inattentively listen to a few well-chosen words on pain delivered by some worthy, well-nourished canon who is going to share the Sunday joint. So the Stupid have resolutely set about the pain-question as well as the pauper-question.

It's up to Science to deal with pain, reason the Stupid, with their inflexible logic, and the Government must deal with the Poor. In the meantime we'll rouse Public Opinion against both scourges, since everyone knows Public Opinion is irresistible. Respect poor men? You might as well respect the lice on their bodies! Those fantasies of the East were all very well in the days of Jesus, who in any case was hardly a man of action. If Jesus-Christ were alive to-day, He would have to 'get on or get out' like everybody else, and were He no more than a small factory-owner, He would have to realize that modern society, in exalting the dignity of money and branding lack of money with degradation, is really 'doing its best' for the poor!

Man is born proud, before everything, and his hungry pride is hungrier even than his belly. A brass medal is sufficient reward to a private for risking his life. Whenever you strike at the prestige of money, you raise the poor man by so much in his own esteem. His poverty shames him less, he suffers it, and such is his folly that he might grow to love it in the end. But in order to function, Society has need of the self-respecting poor. Humiliation puts far more of these at its mercy than ever hunger, and people of a better

type: though they strain at their shafts, they will pull till the end. They pull as others like them die at the front, not from any particular inclination, but so as not to feel small in front of the other fellows, or perhaps merely to get one up on the sergeant. Unless you keep them up to scratch, spurred on by the landlord, the grocer, the rent-collector, continually threatened with the shame attached to tramps and paupers, they may not actually stop working, but they won't work so hard, or may want to do a job their own way, and cease to feel a proper respect for the factory.

In the days when our methods of liberal economy possessed their entire educational value—their full effect—before the deplorable invention of trade-unions, the true workman, the workman we shaped for ourselves, was so deeply convinced of having to atone each day with his labour for the disgrace of being poor, that even when he was old or ill he shrank with equal horror from both workhouse and hospital, less through a clinging to freedom, than shame—shame of being no longer able to 'do for himself', as they so admirably express it.

☞ ☞ The wrath of the Stupid fills the world. It is perhaps less to be feared than their pity. The most inoffensive attitude of the Stupid Man towards pain and distress, is that of stupid indifference. Woe unto us if with tool-box and clumsy fingers, cruel fingers, he meddle with the hinges of the world! But already he fingers no longer, and has produced from the tool-box a huge pair of shears. He prides himself on being 'practical' and fancies that pain, like poverty, is merely

something lacking, something wrong—rather less than nothing. He cannot understand their resistance. So a 'poor man' is not merely a person who would be like everybody else if only he had a banking account? Of course there are 'poor men' of that type, though not as many as one might suppose, because economic life has been warped by so many 'poor' becoming rich—sham rich, retaining in the midst of their riches the vices of poverty. Doubtless such a kind were no more truly poor than truly rich—a bastard race. But how can you expect these subtleties to be appreciated by the same Stupid, whose most cherished illusion is that 'we're all the same underneath'? How will you make them realize that the Poor are a people, with traditions oldest of all the traditions in the world? A people as unchangeable as the Jews. We can come to terms with such a people, but never absorb them into the mass. Come what may, we must leave them to their own law and habits, and that primitive knowledge of life which is of no use to the rest of us. A knowledge like that of childhood, both innocent and intricate, an unskilled wisdom, as pure as the art of ancient engravings.

There is no question of enriching the poor, for all the gold in your mines would probably not suffice. You would merely swell the ranks of the sham rich. No power in the world can check the eternal river of gold, can divert into one lake the myriad streams of magic metal, as elusive as mercury.

✚ ✚ The poor do not want riches but respect: the respect returned to them which once was theirs.

Neither the strong nor the weak can live without respect, but the weak require it most. This theory is in no way unusual. It is unwise to let the weak become degraded—the rot of the weak is a poison for the strong. What would have become of women—your women—if by common consent throughout the centuries, (though you had the means to enslave them body and soul) you had not prudently resolved to respect them? You respect women, you respect children, and it would never occur to anyone among you to regard their helplessness as a shameful illness, almost unmentionable. Since principles have in this matter overruled violence, why should we not hope to see the vile prestige of money likewise overthrown? For the glory of money would be shoddy enough, were it not for its sly accomplices.

✎ ✎ ‘But hasn’t it always been the same?’

Yes, but though moneyed men have often held the power, that power never appeared legitimate to anybody, there has never been, there will never be a legitimate rule of Money. It hides the minute you question it, burrows underground, disappears. Even to-day its relationship with regard to the society under its thumb, is rather like that of the farm-hand who goes to bed with the lady of the house, a rich, ripe widow. He rakes in the profits, but he says ‘Yes, Mum’ when there’s anyone around, with his cap in his hand.

We glorify beauty-queens and cinema stars. But could you imagine one of the Rockefellers being mobbed at the station by the same enthusiastic young

ladies that flock round Mr. Tino Rossi<sup>9</sup>? They don't mind showing with these indiscreet raptures, their pash for the little golden-voiced Corsican. Yet they would blush to display such eagerness over Mr. Ford, were he as good-looking as Mr. Robert Taylor. Money is all-powerful. Yet it has no official representative, like any third-rate power: it is to be found in no full regimental procession. There's the Judge in scarlet and rabbit-skin, the Field-Marshal braided like the Beadle of a cathedral, the Beadle himself, making way for the purple garbed Prelate, the head of the police, the Academician, who is rather like him, the M.P.'s all in black. But there is no Rich Man, though he's paying for the lot, and could afford many fine feathers to his cap.

It is indeed surprising that in this world which belongs to it, money always seems ashamed of itself. Mr. Roosevelt lately recalled how one quarter of American wealth was held by sixty families, which allowing for intermarrying amounted to no more than twenty. Some of those men with not so much as a letter after their names, control about eight millions. I know our young bloods of the Right Wing will think that's rather a joke: 'like the two hundred families here! Hi! Hi! Hi!' Quite so, my lad! I don't know if you've such a thing as a Real Country, as your leaders in their haranguing would have you believe. But there is real wealth in France. And that wealth should make safe our credit. But as you know, it does not. Fifty millions, divided into five-franc pieces tucked away in stockings, are quite unable to balance the influence of one million ready to be used any minute, which juggles with the exchange according

to the principles of Napoleonic Warfare; 'It doesn't matter how many enemy regiments you have against you, so long as you strike the strongest where he is weakest.' And if hidden gold pieces are hard to mobilize, what about fields and forests?

✍ ✍ It is therefore quite feasible that the true riches of a country, however extensive they appear as compared to the capital retained by a few individuals, are in no way protected from the enterprises of such persons. Young patriots, I know these considerations in no way disturb the innocence of your dreams. What do you care for fields and vineyards? 'Down goes the franc! What luck! That's done for this government!' Unfortunately the problem is not exactly what you imagine. I'm not concerned about the franc, my poor lads, I'm concerned for *you*. The franc will eventually recuperate, and its value will sooner or later correspond to the place of France in the world, to the need of the world for my country. The enemy is merely waiting for the hour to strike when financial advisers shall silently wink across at military advisers. Then . . . Then the franc will slowly climb up again, my boys, but not by the same means that now are sucking it down.

You shall redeem it with your blood, you fools!

✍ ✍ If Money has not yet demanded public recognition of its supremacy, it is not so much through craft and prudence, as through an insurmountable timidity. Those that escape its sway can estimate its



power—to a farthing. Money knows nothing of their power. Saints and Heroes can see into its mind but money cannot possibly conceive of what exactly Heroes and Saints think about it.

Love of money alone has only resulted in demented obsessed creatures, which society barely recognizes: they mumble and rot in dark regions, like the mushrooms of Paris. Avarice is not a passion, but a vice. And the world does not belong to Vice, as those tormented in their chastity believe: it belongs to Risk.

The prudent, whose law is thrift, will burst out laughing, I know. But if they risk nothing themselves, they live on the risk of others. And sometimes, thank God, they die of it. Some obscure engineer may suddenly decide, to the bewilderment of his nearest and dearest, that he will construct a mechanical bird, and a young racing-cyclist, after a drink or two, may swear to go up in such a contrivance: twenty years later your safety-first gents get forty-pound bombs crashing from the sky on to their heads.

The world belongs to Risk. The world will soon be a matching of risks, a scramble for the most daring. . . .

✂ ✂ Had I time, I would like to warn you against an illusion much cherished by regular church-goers. They like to believe that 'a Godless World', as they call it, 'will be destroyed by its own excess'. They are expecting another disintegration of Rome. I'm afraid they will be disappointed. The putrid thing in the Roman Empire was its hoard of high officials, plunderers, cynical beasts, so gullible at bottom, lapping

up the scum of Africa and Asia, mouths clamped to the main drain of both continents. The refinement of these brutes is like certain college traditions. For centuries, schoolmasters have been holding up as examples to the young, legendary Petronius' or Lucullus' continually in and out of their steam baths, with ephebi to rub them down. But when you come to think of it, if those folk were always washing, it's because they stank. Nard and balms were poured in vain over the shameful sores described by Juvenal and Lucian. And even when they were healthy, guzzlers that had to lie down the better to stuff themselves, and when full emptied themselves like demi-johns, with fat, gold-ringed fingers stuck down their throats, not even taking the trouble to sit up, must have needed a good sponge-down after dinner. . . . Though, of course, they lived in most sumptuous villas.

The Roman citizen never attracted me. Nevertheless, it was many years before I began to realize not only the manifest coarseness of his nature, but a certain very deep stupidity. I am not referring to the huge, half-witted extravagances: slave-fattened lampreys, nightingale tongues, pearls dissolved in Falernian, and various absurdities whose vulgarity would disgust even the slums of Marseilles. I am thinking of other pastimes regarded as diabolic (and maybe they were) which make professors turn pale and talk in whispers, but they sound to me more like the pranks of idle schoolboys. All those pot-bellied emperors tried very hard to be wicked. But to be truly perverse, they lacked a certain human quality. You cannot *choose* to be damned. You cannot *choose* to share the bread and wine of perdition. Why? Because not one of us

can cruelly offend God except He withhold in Himself the means of loving and serving Him. And what have such scum to do with God?

✚ ✚ I can never get over the 'cultured' type of idiot, swollen with culture, crawling with literature, as though with lice, who declares with a crooking of his little finger that there is 'nothing new in the world'. What does he know about that? The advent of Christ was a new thing. The de-Christiansing of the world would be another. And obviously no person who has not observed the latter phenomenon could have any idea of its consequences.

I am even more amazed at those catholics in whom even a cursory glance at the New Testament does not seem to awaken any realization of a conflict more urgent each day, predicted then by a startling suggestion that had never been heard before, and which has remained, by the way, quite incomprehensible: 'You cannot serve God and Mammon.'

But I know them! If by miracle this reminder disturbs anyone of their kind, he will hurry off to his confessor who will gently inform him, in the name of innumerable casuists, that this advice is only intended for the perfect, and consequently need not disturb shareholders. I quite agree. And in future, therefore, I will write the word 'Money' with a capital M. You cannot serve God and Money. The Power of Money is opposed to the Power of God.

✚ ✚ The Rich were known to Antiquity. Many

people suffered through unfair distribution, through the selfishness, greed and pride of the Rich, though maybe we give insufficient thought to the thousands of ploughmen, herdsmen, shepherds and hunters who, thanks to limited means of communication, were able to live inaccessibly alone, in poverty and freedom. And here is a factor of terrific importance: the profiteers of those days were mere officials, humbly taking their stance behind the victorious general, gleaning their profit from the spoils the army left behind—and God knows what the Roman army was before the old civilizations of the East had provided that herd of road-making, law-constructing billy-goats with real leaders and soldiers. At all events in those remote times, moneyed men exploited the world according to the luck of fruitful expeditions, they did not control it. What is there in common, I ask you, between those more or less official pirates, bent on filling their coffers while the going was good, returning to revel in their ill-gotten gains, perhaps perishing of their incontinence, and a respectable millionaire of to-day, gloomy and dyspeptic, able to re-distribute with the stir of an eyelid, with the sweep of a gold fountain-pen, the vast burden of universal want? How can they be compared? A slave-trafficker of the eighteenth century would have been quite unable to picture such a person, who would have appeared quite ridiculous to him: and indeed he is an absurd mongrel-breed—which has now become fixed—of a number of very different species. You gabble parrot-wise that he is the ‘product of Capitalism’. He is not. He is the creator of it. Obviously not through any concerted plan. It is a matter of instinctive adaptation and

defence. The bad rich man of old, the outrageous profligate, with his swaggering, extravagance and sloth, was almost alone in receiving the full impact of Christianity, its overpowering impetus. Had he managed to subsist in the Christian world, he could not have prospered.

✎ ✎ In the Middle Ages men were not sufficiently virtuous to despise money, but they despised moneyed men. For a while they spared the Jew, because the Jew was a drain for gold, as an abscess is a drain for pus. When the time was ripe, they emptied the Jew, exactly as a surgeon emptied an abscess. I do not approve this method, I merely submit that it was not in contradiction with Church doctrine regarding interest-bearing loans and usury. Short of being abolished, the system was at least stigmatized. It is one thing to tolerate prostitution, but another to deify prostitutes, like the Mediterranean scum, on many occasions in the past, for whom the sale of scented cattle has always been a national industry.

Clearly in the days when, with impunity, children could beat back to the ghetto with cabbage-stalks the most opulent capitalist in gabardine, money lacked the moral prestige necessary to its objective.

✎ ✎ Christianity has not eliminated the Rich, nor has it enriched the Poor, for its object has never been the abolition of original sin. Yet Christianity might have indefinitely delayed the subjection of the world to Money, and maintained the hierarchy of human

greatness, maintained honour. But thanks to the same mysterious law which provides animals transplanted from temperate to polar regions with an extra coat of fur, the Rich Man, in a climate so unfavourable to his kind, finally acquired a prodigious resistance, a prodigious vitality. He had patiently to adjust himself from within to economic conditions, laws, customs, even morality. It would be an exaggeration to suggest that he brought about the intellectual revolution which gave birth to experimental science, but from the first he backed it up, and later directed it. Though he may not have created, for instance, the crushing conquest of time and space by machinery, he exploited that conquest whose only use was to gain him power, and which turned the old-time money-lender, glued to his counting-house, into the anonymous master of human savings and labour. Under such onslaughts Christianity perished, and the Church is rocking. What can be done against a power which controls Modern Progress, of which it created the myth, and keeps humanity under the perpetual menace of war, which alone it can influence, war become a normal facet of economic activity, whether one be 'preparing' or actually 'declaring' it?

These views are generally disliked by Conservatives. I wonder why. The shoddiest little shop-keeper will regard as a dangerous 'public enemy' an innocent soaker ready to spit in your eye after swilling his week's pay, to show 'he's as good as you are'. For the shop-keeper identifies himself with Mr. Rothschild or Mr. Rockefeller, and his stupid vanity is flattered at the thought. There are many psychological explanations of this peculiarity. In the first place, with the majority

of our contemporaries the distinction between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' has finally taken the place of all others. The 'haves' think of themselves as lambs for which wolves lie in wait. But in the eyes of poor devils, the lambs become sharks down whose throats they swim.

The yawning chasm of blood gaping over the world will devour the lot, and so reconcile them.

This morbid obsession, born of fear, profoundly affects social life. Politeness, even, no longer expresses a state of mind, a conception of living. It tends to become a succession of rites, that have lost their original meaning: nods and simpers, cluckings, standard smiles—reserved for a number of people who have all been taught the same tricks. Dogs behave thus between themselves—*only* between themselves, though, for you will rarely catch one sniffing at a cat. In the same way my contemporaries only show off in this particular way to persons of their own class.

✂ ✂ When I was young I lived in an old and very dear house among trees, a tiny cottage in the country of Artois, full of the murmur of leaves and waters. The old place is no longer mine—never mind that! So long as the new owners treat it well! So long as they don't hurt it, regard it as a friend and not merely as a convenience. . . . Never mind! Never mind! Every Monday the old folk came to 'beg their bread', as we say over there. Sometimes they came a long way, from other villages, but I knew them nearly all by name. They were reliable customers. They even helped each other out. 'I've come on account o'

So-an'-So, who's abed with the rheumatics.' When over a hundred appeared, my father used to say: 'By Jove, things are looking up.'

I know such memories are of no interest to you: forgive me. But I want you to understand that I was brought up to respect old people, with or without possessions—especially old ladies, and even the hideous minxes of seventy we see to-day have not cured me of that prejudice. Well, at that time I had to address those old beggars with my cap in my hand, and they considered it as natural as I did, and were quite unmoved.

Those were the people of ancient France, they knew how to live, and though they may have reeked of tobacco and snuff, they didn't stink of shops, they hadn't faces like shop-keepers, sacristans, beadles—faces with that look of having sprouted in basements. They were more like the Valois or the Bourbons, than any respectable member of the middle classes. . . .

✍ ✍ There are 'Socialist' and 'Conservative' capitalists. But the people as a whole does not really belong to either. The people belongs to itself. It is—the People.

All efforts to split it up into classes invented by political doctrinaires, only serve to set up currents and cross-currents in the great mass, for the benefit of adventurers.

My idea of the People is certainly not inspired by democracy. 'Democracy' is a high-brow invention, much the same kind of figment as was 'Monarchy' in the mind of M. Joseph le Maistre<sup>10</sup>. Real kingship



does not live on political theories, for it has no time to define 'the people', and must simply take them as they are, not by taste nor choice, but by reason of some deep vocation, or if you prefer it, by necessity.

A king can do nothing without his people. I believe—indeed I almost fear—they can do nothing without him. Monarchy has to bargain with the other classes, which because of the complex interests they represent, interests overlapping the national framework, must up to a point be considered as separate states within the State. But kings govern by means of their people. You will say: 'They do not always remember that!' In which case they perish. They may lose the support of all the other classes, for these can always be set one against the other by skilful manœuvring. But the people's needs are too simple, too concrete, of too pressing a kind to be dismissed.

The people need work, need bread, and need self-respect, a form of honour which best suits them, an honour as simple as work or bread, with as few frills about it.

Yet the notaries, attorneys, men of law, who made the French Revolution, thought they could indefinitely postpone attending to such simple matters. They fancied that a people, a people shaped by a thousand years of history, could be clamped into cold storage until convenient. 'Let's deal with the "best" people first, we'll see later on.'

Later on it was too late. In the new mansion built to the designs of the law-givers of Ancient Rome, no room had been provided for the people of Ancient France: they would have had to pull it down and start afresh. Nothing surprising in that. The liberal

architect was no more preoccupied with the housing of his 'proletariat' than the Roman architect bothered about his slaves. But the slaves were merely a pack of helots of all countries and tongues, of all classes, a degraded, sacrificial portion of humanity, a miserable herd created by man. Whilst modern society is allowing slowly to decompose in the darkness of its cellars, a magnificent creation of nature and history.

You may not agree, but I cannot believe monarchy would have permitted the fair countenance of my country to become so grievously deformed. We have had selfish, ambitious, frivolous kings, and some were wicked, but I doubt a line of French princes would ever have lacked the sense of nationhood to the point of letting a handful of bourgeois or petit bourgeois, business-men or intellectuals, jabbering and gesticulating in the front row, to stand for France, whilst our people, so proud, so sensible, so intuitive, gradually became that anonymous mass called a proletariat.

I do not intend to betray the class to which I belong, for I belong to no class; I care nothing for classes, and anyhow there are no more classes. By what can one tell an upper-class gentleman? By his banking-account? By his degree? By his occupation? By his medals?

I'm no anarchist. It seems to me perfectly right that the State should look for its civil servants among the more brainy lads of our schools and colleges. Where else could they be found? In any case they are not so very much to be envied. Believe me, had I a magic wand, I would not feel I were bestowing a particular favour on a village blacksmith, singing to the flames of his forge, by changing him into a school-

teacher. Though I readily admit that such people ought to be treated with more consideration than the blacksmith or myself, because discipline is an aid to work and saves time both for those who order and those who obey.

When you're waiting at the counter in a post-office I hope you never argue with the man in charge, but unobtrusively wait to be noticed, or at most draw his attention with a discreet little cough. If he considers your behaviour a tribute to his intelligence and personality—why, he's ever so mistaken. The middle classes are mistaken in somewhat the same way. Because they provide the largest number of overseers and persons in control, they are liable to regard themselves as a national aristocracy, with the greatest number of leaders in their ranks. But they are not leaders—they are merely technicians, which is not the same thing.

When I say there are no more classes, I am expressing the general feeling. There are no more classes because the people is not a class, in the exact sense of the word, and the upper classes have slowly mingled into one most aptly named 'middle'.

A *middle* class is not a class at all, and still less an aristocracy. It could not even provide the first essentials of the latter. Nothing is further removed from its spirit than the spirit of aristocracy. One might define it thus: 'All decently educated citizens, able to do anything, and interchangeable.' The same definition applies equally well to what is called democracy. Democracy is the natural state of persons who can be used for anything. When there are a sufficient number they assemble and form a democracy. The

mechanism of universal suffrage suits them perfectly, because it is logical, and these interchangeable people finally rely on the vote to find out what each of them is. They could just as easily draw lots.

There is no people's democracy: a true democracy of the people is inconceivable. A man of the people is not able to do anything, and can only talk about what he knows. He realizes that elections favour the gift of the gab. A chap always talking at his work is a lazybones. Left to himself, a man of the people would have the same conception of power as the aristocrat—whom he recalls, for that matter, in so many ways: power is for whoever goes and gets it, who feels strong enough to take it. That is why the word 'dictator' does not mean the same thing to him as it does to us. The dictatorship of which the people dream—is their own. Politicians will turn that dream into a very different reality. I agree. But the shade of difference is a revelation, all the same.

I am not writing this for the 'working classes', who would never read it, anyhow. I want to state clearly that no national life is possible or even conceivable once the people have lost their true character, their racial and cultural originality, and have become no more than a vast cistern of besotted hacks, with a tiny sprinkling of future bourgeois to complete them. It doesn't matter as much as you imagine for the élite to possess no national distinction. The élite of the twelfth century were not particularly 'national', nor were those of the sixteenth, in France. It is the people who give to each country its inimitable shape. . . .

Whatever faults one may find with Monarchy, such

a régime was at least able to guard intact this most precious heritage, for even in the middle of the eighteenth century, when clergy, nobility, law and intellectuals were all showing signs of putrefaction, the man of the people was hardly any different from his medieval ancestor. It is a despairing thought, indeed, that out of the most stable of human compounds, we have managed to create an ungovernable rabble kept in check by machine-guns.

☞ ☞ Little by little a bourgeois proletariat has grown up opposite the 'working-class' proletariat. It has neither the stability of the older middle classes nor its family traditions, still less its commercial honesty. It is constantly renewed by the tricks of economic anarchy, and led by the nose, in the same way as the other.

How can one describe this mass of little shopkeepers, multiplied beyond all measure by post-War inflation, and in vain decimated each day by bankruptcy? Why call them shopkeepers? A shopkeeper used to be productive. Difficulties of storage, rarity of goods, their diversity, in the days when mass-production did not exist, the exacting demands of customers in the habit of passing down from generation to generation the simplest domestic articles, the strict control of provincial criticism, the natural intermingling of friendship and marriage, obligation to follow, at least in appearance, the precepts of the Decalogue regarding the property of others—all this made of trade a real art. To-day almost any ragamuffin can boast of belonging to such a corporation, so

long as he can rent premises and write himself down as tenth or twentieth intermediary between the manufacturers, desperately under-cutting the others, and the stupid customer whose destiny it is to be robbed.

Don't be misguided by the appearance of some filthy den, a dilapidated shop-window with broken glass, the feeble tinkle of a broken bell and the incongruous stink of onions and cats each time the door is opened. Certain cobwebs paradoxically woven across corners, apparently inaccessible even to flies, denote how the patient waiting of the spider always wins in the end. There is no doubt that over-brilliant displays put off some poor kind folk bred in the illusion—so pathetic, come to think of it!—that the small shop-keeper makes the smallest profits. The proof that these snares nourish the insect lurking within, is the remarkable spreading of these shop-keepers since the War, a factor of which it is easy to convince yourself by a glance at the directory. No doubt bankruptcy lies in wait for this kind of spider, and he doesn't always get his four square meals. But he will hang on till the end, though he search the dustbins for his goods when credit is denied him.

This is no exaggeration. Supposing, for instance, all official control of butchers' meat were suddenly to cease, whatever your sympathy for the retailer, you are bound to admit that he would soon fish out of the darkest corners of his ice-house, the full flowerings of putrefaction.

But that you should agree or not makes no difference. *We saw.* We saw him emerge. We saw him with our own eyes. We saw him emerge from the wreckage of villages, dodging the shells, the small shop-

keeper, released for a few months from the indifferent eyes of the law, from the competition of his fellows, and even from the complaints of customers; for between ourselves you couldn't expect much in the way of 'complaint' from the ragged fighters in the trenches. We were young, and many of those fellows had grey hair. They had daughters too.

We saw them. They had hold of the right end of the stick, as we say. Our only revenge was that when things were at their worst and all supplies of both food and water were suspended, hunger drove them to eat their own stuff, and thirst to drink their own wine, poor in alcohol but rich in mushroom growth and mould. Then they would swell up with unhealthy fat which trickled in grey sweat down their heavy cheeks as they 'talked their shop' with an ugly smile of dirty teeth.

For they showed their contempt of us almost openly, deplored our bad behaviour, and every spring made a point of displaying in their front windows, in readiness for the coming attack, a hideous selection of funeral wreaths, probably manufactured in prisons.

It is no good saying that the cesspool of war always hatches such larvae. The fact is you haven't *known* them. You never sat with them, after closing time, between the wife tormented by varicose veins, and the young lady with body-odour, and drained the meagre dregs of 'goodwill'. Those folk were unfortunately lacking in imagination, and therefore hardly accessible to compassion, but they in no way resembled the plunderers of dead bodies that used to follow the armies. God! They wouldn't have risked a shooting, or even six months' imprisonment! They yearned

for the esteem of their 'betters', had no pity for the crowd, were hard on young people who wasted their money, and never forgave wives and daughters who misbehaved, or bad debts.

Don't ask me what became of them. It is hardly feasible they should all have perished on Armistice Day! Inflation spews them up, deflation swallows them down again. Quite so. And you can recognize them no more, for they don't stand out from the rest of us. They were not monsters. The circumstances were monstrous, and they submitted to them; or rather, adapted to them their tiny store of ideas. They conformed their soul. They were not adventurers or rebels, for as soon as they had made their pile, they settled down and married off their daughters to solicitors. Then they would dream of the past, as a mature man dreams of his youth and his loves.

'Remember that stock of smoked salmon the Commissariat turned down, and we bought it back on the sly, six sous a tin on an average. We cleared fifteen thousand francs out of that little deal.'

It would be interesting to know how many of those merchants slipped back into the proletariat from whence they came. For my part I think they are firmly welded to the middle classes. And for them the dictatorship of the proletariat is not so much to be feared as the advent of the People to liberty, independence and honour.

❧ ❧ France cannot be rebuilt from the top; she must be rebuilt from her foundations. It will be more



expensive, but we can't help that. Let it cost what it will. It won't be so expensive as civil war.

Our upright middle classes think it quite natural that Signor Mussolini's imperial itch should induce France and England to huge armament expenditure. They're not at all annoyed with Signor Mussolini. They don't consider him in any way responsible for our increasing misfortune. 'It's all these social reforms. The people are in the hands of most dangerous leaders.'

And what are you doing to get them away?

'We'll attend to that later. We haven't time, and since the Left make the most of the scare of Fascism, we exploit *our* people's fear of Communism, it's only fair. Anyhow, the working classes don't really trust us. If we went over to their side, we'd lose far more bourgeois support than we'd gain in proletarian support. You can't go in for social reform with no money.'

Why didn't you start when you had some?

'We're not standing idle, by any means. We do all we can—with propaganda.'

No doubt. When the people think just as you do, the social problem will be almost solved, and how cheaply!

✚ ✚ Saint Dominic once dreamt of a like reform of Christian society, a vast restoration of doctrine. In the same way as the Communists to-day, the Heretics of the time threatened the faith and the possessions of the upper classes. The latter soon made it quite clear to their governments that the Faith question

could remain in abeyance, but the salving of Property required more powerful measures. Thus was born a vast purging, rather like the one I have just seen in Spain, known to history as the Inquisition.

If the Right Wing to-day are going to use the same formula, they will be signing their own abdication.

‘But supposing there is no other way?’

Then give it up. We are beginning to realize that peace between nations has to be purchased every twenty years by the sacrifice of a few million young men. If Social Peace is going to be as expensive, the system cannot be worth much.

Get out, all of you!

## II

✎ ✎ I strive to express myself without irony. For irony never touches the heart. Too often it is the cry of a heart that is wounded. Now is unveiled to the world the tragedy without beginning or end, because it has neither object nor meaning. At least none that can be confessed. It is a war of despair, a blood-stained alibi of adversaries reduced to impotence, powerless to create, some opposed to all retreat, the others to all advance, yet both unable to define, or even to conceive, either advance or retreat. They all cry, hand over heart: 'My intentions! My intentions!' Who cares if your intentions were good? What matters is who shall exploit them. And what has become of your 'intentions', between ourselves, you wise men? They run riot all over the world. Your good intentions have gone crazy. You may whistle for them—they will not return. Nationalism, for instance, bred in the old gentle Lorrainc homesteads of Maurice Barrès, nourished with so much precious ink—what a long way it has drifted since, all the way to Japan and China! For the powerful masters of gold and universal opinion soon tore it from the hands of philosophers and poets. My Lorraine! My Provence! My Country! The place where my dead are laid! But *they* cry: 'My phosphates! My petrol! My iron!'

When I was fifteen we were fighting against individualism, and individualism, alas, was already dead. Each European country carried a perfectly-formed embryo totalitarian state in her belly. Had you laid your ear at the height of the navel, you would surely have heard the first heart-beats. . . . And Liberalism! God, how we flogged that horse. Unluckily he cared no longer for our blows. He lay in a coma, and died at the first shot of the Great War. Yes, our intentions were pure, too innocent. We shouldn't have allowed them out by themselves. What is left of them now?

I don't say this to disturb the Theorists. What would be the object? It is absurd to believe with Jean-Jacques Rousseau that man is born good. He is born capable of good and evil far beyond the imagination of Moralists, for he was not created in their image, but in the image of God. And his corruptor is not merely the disturbing influence within—instinct, desire, whatever you like to call it—his corrupter is the greatest among the angels, fallen from Heavens' highest peak.

The teachings of history are certainly of some profit to law-makers and politicians, but man always exceeds in some direction the definitions with which they hope to encircle him. At least the 'man' of whom I speak. He isn't seeking 'happiness', as you like to imagine, he wants joy, and the joy of man is not of this world, or at least not entirely of this world.

Of course you are free to believe in the *homo sapiens* of the humanists, but you would be mistaken in giving to the word the same meaning as I do, for your order is not mine and your disorder is not mine—and what you call evil is merely a void: an empty space within,

like the imprint of a seal in wax. I am not suggesting that your definitions are absurd, but we shall never share the same ones. For I can use yours, whilst you will never be able to use mine. They enabled you to attain to greatness for a while—a while only—for your civilizations are crumbling at the very time when you fancied them immortal, like those glorious children who have a fatal weakness concealed in them, and never live to see their youth. And so you relinquish your place to the ink-consumers who spend centuries arguing over the disaster, and suggesting whys and wherefores.

But you can achieve nothing lasting for the happiness of men, because you have no idea of their unhappiness. Have I made myself clear? Our share of happiness, our paltry happiness, arises from all parts of the earth, and returns therein with us on the last day, but the essence of our unhappiness is supernatural. Those who have a clear distinctive vision of it, in the manner of Descartes<sup>11</sup>, are not alone to bear its weight. Quite the contrary. For the greatest misfortune is submission to injustice, not the suffering of it. Submission without understanding! I believe that to be the only form of damnation in this life.

Over there, in Majorca, I saw lorry-loads of men pass over the Rambla. They rumbled like thunder on a level with the many-coloured terraces, freshly washed and running with water, gay with the murmur of country fairs. The lorries were grey with road-dust, the men too were grey, sitting four by four, grey caps slung on crosswise, hands spread over their

tent-cloth trousers, patiently. They were kidnapping them every day from lost villages, at the time when they came in from the fields. They set off for their last journey, shirts still clinging to their shoulders with perspiration, arms still full of the day's toil, leaving the soup untouched on the table, and a woman, breathless, a minute too late, at the garden wall, with the little bundle of belongings hastily twisted into a bright new napkin: *A Dios! Recuerdos!*

The sentimental appeal? God preserve me from it! I merely wish to say, and I shall never tire of saying, that those people had neither killed nor hurt anybody. They were country-folk like those you know, or rather like those your fathers knew, those your fathers shook hands with, for they made me think of the hard-chiselled faces in our French villages.

Remember, they had just been given their republic—*Viva la republica!*—and in the evening of July 18, 1936, it was still the government recognized by everybody, acclaimed by the army, approved by chemists, doctors, professors, by all the intellectuals.

'There is no doubt they were quite decent fellows,' the Spanish bishops will probably answer, 'for the majority were converted *in extremis*. According to the report of our Venerable Brother of Majorca, only ten per cent of those dear children refused the last sacraments before being dispatched by our good officers.'

A remarkable percentage, I agree, and one which does great honour to your lordships. May God reward you! I am not judging, at least for the moment, this form of apostolate. But presuming it were shortly to be adopted over here, I have every right to

wonder what results we French catholics are likely to achieve.

I am writing these last pages at Toulon. Supposing, for instance, on his return from Salamanca, where M. Charles Maurras<sup>12</sup> is bound one of these days to go and pay his respects to the great General Franco, the author of *Antinea* were to undertake a purging of his native town, on the same lines. I doubt the curé of Martigues would achieve such comforting results. Greater stringency would therefore be required.

(Not that I consider M. Maurras in the least capable of exterminating the population of Martigues. He will continue to spend his hard-working days between the rue de Verneuil, the Croissant printing-works and—I hope—the *Académie Française*, whose echoing vaults have just been thrown open to him.)

✍ ✍ I shall not always attempt to justify the following pages by reasoned logic, still less by the feeling which drives me to write them. Once again—but on this occasion more than ever before—I shall speak my own tongue, knowing that it will only be heard of those who speak it with me, who spoke it long before they read my books, and will still speak it when I am no more, when the frail memory of myself and my works will have slipped into oblivion. They alone matter to me. I do not disdain the others. Far from disdaining, I would wish to understand them better, for to understand is already to love.

That which parts human beings and makes enemies of them has perhaps no profound reality. The differences on which ineffectually labour our judgment and

experience, would disperse like dreams if we could look upon them with eyes that were sufficiently free, for the greatest of our misfortunes is only to be able to give others such a restricted idea of ourselves, interspersed by gaps of horrible silence.

I write these new chapters of the 'Great Fear' neither for the pleasure nor even the taste of it, but because the time is ripe for them, and I have no pretensions of controlling my life. None, apart from saints, have ever controlled their lives. All life is under the sign of desire or fear, unless it be under the sign of love. And is not love both desire and fear?

My life doesn't matter. I merely wish it to be faithful until the end, to the child I was. For what I possess of honour, and my paltry share of courage, I inherit from the small being, so mysterious now, who ran through the September rain across flooded fields, his heart heavy at the thought of approaching school, of dismal courtyards where dark winter would bid him welcome, of stinking classrooms, of refectories with greasy breath, of interminable, ostentatious high masses, where the goaded young soul knew of nothing to share with God but weariness—from the child I was, who is now for me like a grandfather. Why should I have changed? Why should I change? My hours are numbered, the holidays will surely come to an end, and the dark porch awaiting me is darker even than the other. Why should I waste my time with grave men, whom here in Spain we call: *Hombres dignos, honrados*? Now, as always, their frivolity revolts me. Only then I was revolted without knowing why. Besides, I feared some day I would become one of them. 'When you're my age,' they said. . . . Well,



I am. I can look them in the eyes, knowing I have escaped them for ever. I care nothing for their wisdom which, like their faces, bears the stamp of austere cunning, ever disappointed, ever vain.

I am not hoping for my judgment to be infallible, were I to attempt any judgment. (I could, of course, like many another, show up in the manner of an expert recorder, tastes and depravities, misunderstandings and spites, and then, all quivering with indignation, pronounce irrevocable sentences in the name of Reason.) I shall not try to attract sympathy. Nor shall I attempt to shock. I have nothing new to tell. The sorrows of which I shall speak are doubtless hardly any different from many that have already overtaken us. I am not preventing you from turning your back on them.

When I was thirteen my teacher—so wise and young, of eternal youth, the youth of religion, the only kind able to capture a child's heart—gave me *France of the Jews* to read. It unveiled for me injustice, in the precise sense of the word; not the abstract injustice of moralists and philosophers, but Injustice itself, a living thing, with eyes of steel. Had I faced those eyes alone, no doubt my fate would have been the same as many who throughout the centuries have broken themselves, one after another, against those inflexible ramparts. Later I realized how solitary thinkers are the particular prey of this female Satan, of which the male is Deceit. What does she care for the others? To this Creature, as old as time, of what importance are the weaklings which she devours as easily as a whale a shoal of young salmon?

Either injustice is but another name for Stupidity

—but I dare not believe it, for she is eternally laying her traps, timing her attack, now rearing, now creeping, wearing all disguises, even that of charity—or she is what I believe, and has a will, a conscience, a monstrous memory somewhere concealed in Creation.

If you come to think of it, you will agree that this must be so, that I am expressing in my own words a fact of experience.

Who dare deny that evil is an organized thing, a universe of greater reality than that which greets the senses, with its sinister landscapes, pale skies, cold sun, and cruel stars? A kingdom both of the spirit and the flesh, of prodigious density, of infinite weight, beside which the kingdoms of the earth are mere figments and symbols. To this kingdom nothing is really opposed save the Kingdom of God, which we have named, alas, without knowledge or conception of it, but whose Advent we nevertheless await.

Injustice belongs to our familiar world, but not exclusively. The livid face whose grin resembles that of lust, stiffened in the hideous concentration of unthinkable covetousness, is amongst us, but the heart of the monster beats somewhere outside the world, in solemn rhythm, and it shall never be granted any man to penetrate those secrets. She covets the weak in order stealthily to provoke her true prey. The true prey of Injustice are precisely those who answer her challenge, confront her, innocently believe they can stride up to her, like David to Goliath. Ah, it is the miserable rabble that she disdains, which she throws to the ground and instantly crushes beneath her weight. Against the others born to loathe her, who are the sole real objects of her monstrous desire, she

is all envy and craft. She slithers through their hands, lies 'dead' at their feet, then rears and stings them in the ankle. From that time they belong to her without knowing it, for her frozen poison is in their veins. Poor devils who believe the Kingdom of Injustice can be divided against itself and oppose injustice to injustice.

I thank God who chose masters for me at an age when masters can still inspire us with love. Without them I sometimes think the continued evidence of stupidity and cruelty would have ground me to dust, like many others who have prematurely sustained the shock of life, and have only the appearance of men left, who are no more like men than a pile of stones is like stone.

I so dearly loved the masters of my youth that I went a little beyond their books, beyond their teachings. I think I had a deep presentiment of their fate.

You cannot get the better of injustice, you cannot bend her back. All those who tried fell into even greater injustice, or died in despair, like Martin Luther. I know this. If you know it too, I shall not blame you for turning your back on what you consider inevitable tragedies. Yet I would like to persuade you to face them for a while, not in order to stem their flow, which may be irresistible, but in order to see them, to see them just once as they are, to see them with your own eyes. They are not at all what you imagine. They in no way correspond to your idea of them. They are on your level, whatever you may feel about it. They are on the level of your fear. They are probably fear itself. . . .

Listen, for I have never been more serious. I have

just seen a whole unhappy country delivered up to a demon of this kind.

Fear, true fear, is a savage frenzy. Of all the insanities of which we are capable, it is surely the most cruel. There is naught to equal its drive, and naught can survive its thrust. Anger, which resembles it, is but a passing state, a sudden squandering of vital force. Besides, anger is blind. Fear, on the other hand, provided one gets over the first 'terror', combines with hate into one of the most stable psychological conditions. I even wonder if hate and fear—emotions so closely akin—have not reached the final stage of their mutual evolution, and may not be about to mingle in a new passion, so far unknown, but of which one may sometimes catch a glimpse, in the voice, in the eyes. . . .

Religious instinct, still as strong as ever in the deep heart of man, and science which crazily exploits him, both give rise to the slow emergence of powerful images which nations instantly seize upon with furious eagerness, images which are among the most frightful that the genius of mankind has ever suggested to human sensibility, to human nerves so terribly in tune with the mighty harmonies of pain.

✎ ✎ The same people who make out they can solve all the problems of political and social life, thanks to examples culled from Roman history, will surely reply that fear has long been known to psychologists, and there is no more to be said on such a thrashed-out question. I am of a different opinion, no doubt because I haven't the same idea of humanity as those

theorists. Having defined man, they come to logical conclusions concerning humanity, as a naturalist might concerning a particular species of animal. (I do not know if even the latter reasoning would necessarily prove correct, for animal species seem quite capable of evolution.) At all events the nervous system of man may have undergone profound modifications which for the time being might be hard to reveal. Fear of death, for instance, is a universal feeling which can take on varied forms, some of which are surely beyond human analysis. There is only one being who knew them all, and that was Jesus Christ in His Agony. It is not the destiny of mankind which is mysterious, but its vocation. Historians know very little of its true history. They are like dramatic critics before an actor, whose private life they completely ignore. After a twenty years' interval, the same actress plays Rosalind, and it is still a real Rosalind, only the young girl has become a woman.

✚ ✚ One day I believe this world will come to an end. I believe our kind, in approaching the end, hoards in the depths of consciousness all that is required to disconcert psychologists, moralists, and other beasts of the ink-pot. It is as though the presentiment of death controlled the life of our senses. What will that life become when the presentiment of death has given place to the knowledge of catastrophe about to engulf us all? Of course the old vocabulary will still do. Do we not use the same word 'love' to describe the desire which unites the trembling hands of two young lovers, and the dark chasm into which Phaedra<sup>13</sup>

let herself fall, with arms crucified and the howl of a she-wolf?

✎ ✎ I do not boast of having unearthed new forms of hate or fear in the course of the last two years. But I did happen to find myself in the most favourable part of the world for certain valuable observations, which experience has already confirmed.

Credulous though the Conservatives have always been, and however powerful their knack of infallibly picking on 'causes' and men doomed in advance to be unpopular, perhaps they will nevertheless grant to-day that the war in Spain can no longer possibly be described as an outburst of Christian and National feeling.

Last spring, when I endeavoured to prepare them for certain disappointments, they only laughed. Now there is no longer any question of an outburst: it is a conflagration. And a fire which has taken more than two years to put out begins to look a little sinister, don't you agree?

In Spain I saw—I lived through—the pre-revolutionary period. I lived it with a handful of young *Phalangistas*, full of honour and courage, whose programme, though I could not swallow it whole, was inspired by a furious sense of social justice. Moreover, the contempt they professed for the Republican army and its staff, traitors to the King and their sworn allegiance, was only equalled by their wise mistrust of the clergy, expert in electoral bargainings and underhand manoeuvres, carried on under the cloak of the *Accion Popular*<sup>14</sup>, with the priceless Gil Robles<sup>15</sup> as intermediary.

You ask what became of those lads? I tell you there were barely five hundred in Majorca, on the eve of the *Pronunciamento*. Two months later there were 15,000, thanks to a most shameless recruiting drive of army officers, with the object of destroying the Party and its discipline, organized by an Italian adventurer called Rossi. The *Phalange* became transformed into a branch of military police, systematically ordered to do its dirty work, till such a time as its leaders could either be imprisoned or shot by the Franco dictatorship, and its best elements stripped of their uniforms and mixed into the general mass. But that's another story, as Kipling says. Wherever the 'general' of the Spanish episcopate goes now, the jaws of a skull snap at his heels, and he has to kick it off his boots. Good luck to their lordships!

☞ ☞ You may think what you like of General Franco, but it is a certain fact that he would never have found so much as a score of Spaniards to follow him, had he unwisely let it be known that the *Pronunciamento*, which he introduced as mere police regulations, would last more than three weeks.

Napoleon III was obviously a very different sort of gentleman—still, if on the eve of December 1st, he had been able to foresee that two years later he would still be hanging about the heights of Montmartre with an army of Italians, Germans, and lousy Moors, slinging bombs at Notre-Dame, the share of royal blood in his veins would surely have choked him, and any bishop so despicable as to promise him prayers and support would have been sent packing with a kick in

the pants—presuming the French episcopate ever harboured quite such a swine.

✎ ✎ Let no one do me the injustice of considering me more thin-skinned than the average. I don't mind admitting to the ladies that the sight of blood leaves me unmoved: I experience neither horror, nor pleasure, nor mere curiosity, no doubt because I lack some particular organ which they possess to transmit these kind of itchings to the brain-crust. This psychological reservation which I have had the prudence to make, must not be mistaken for an admission of weakness. If so it is a weakness common to all those of my sex. I have seen many die. Perhaps my place was marked out among the graves of the last war, by the sides of my companions. Yet the huge gaping vaults of tomorrow arouse in me no panic.

Revolutionaries both false and true have long made use of the art of terror. Terrorism does not belong to them exclusively. There is no reason for them to be so stuck up about it. History has shown that the trick can be used by all. And the Reign of Terror of the Catholic kings in Flanders was a 'holy terror', indeed!

✎ ✎ Surely you will agree that if I had been inclined to hysterics, I would have cleared out of Majorca, with my wife and children, when the firing first began.

I see it all. . . . I see again that brilliant Sunday morning. For weeks we had been awaiting, without



really believing it, the armed raid promised by Primo de Rivera.

What had we to hope from the army? The Spanish army, greatest abettor and sole beneficiary of the foul misgovernment of Morocco, had been rigorously purged of its reactionaries; it was controlled by masonic lodges composed of officers, against which the will of the first Primo had already been shattered. It was, moreover, violently anti-clerical. (It is still anti-clerical, in common with almost the entire male population of Spain, as no doubt the near future will show.)

✍ ✍ I still think, with a certain amount of bitterness, that had Alfonso XIII been a little less scrupulous about shedding blood, the blood of Spaniards—a traditional scruple of the Bourbons—he might have spared his country this terrible suffering. He need only have shot General Sanjuro, who quite unexpectedly refused him the support of the civil guard, and so stabbed in the back the Monarchy. Nor will anything make me cease to regret that similar measures were not taken at the time against the Communist aviator, Franco, whose propaganda had undermined the morale of a corps which till then was reputed faithful, and who, disguised as a Fascist, until recently was in command of the air-base at Palma.

✍ ✍ From the army we had nothing to hope, nor from the clericals. Till the very last hour, the *Accion Popular*, which united nine-tenths of the old-fashioned moderates, mouthed the most ferocious democracy,

passionately parliamentary: its hatred of the Monarchy was only equalled by its dislike of the *Phalange*, which, by the by, would not give it votes.

Dictators cut no ice just then. Herr Hitler was usually called anti-Christ, and at Palma, the good Sacred Heart nuns made their pupils pray for Haile Selassie every evening. M. Charles Maurras's diabolical maxim: 'By any means', a slogan which thirty-two years experience have shown on the whole to be quite harmless, was quoted with horror.

The celebrated Jesuit Father Laburu indited royalists and aristocrats at huge demonstrations, and the workers of the *Federacion Nacional de Trabajo* were among the loudest in their applause.

I hope you will agree that such a state of affairs doesn't offer any too hopeful a prospect for those young French Communists whom our Catholic Action boys insist on taking to church to hear the sermon. What last date for conversion have our democratic Christian staff-officers secretly fixed, before they decide to have these wretched youths shot off by the pious warriors of the next crusade?

✎ ✎ This last is a perfectly serious question. There's nothing to laugh at in what I say. I itch to have a good straight talk with one of those innocent clerical Machiavellis, who seem to imagine that a great people can be herded about like an infant school, and then, when disaster overtakes them, assume all the offended dignity of a schoolmaster in charge of a noisy prep. Oh, I shouldn't trouble to be eloquent! I should simply ask him:

Is it true that one big democratic and parliamentary party commanded the immense majority, almost the totality of votes, both male and female, among Spanish catholics, yes or no?

"Oh, no doubt . . ."

Did the Catholic *Accion* endorse that party, provide its framework?

"We can't deny it."

Did any one speaker or action worker in that peaceful crusade ever, in the last few years, publicly assert the painful necessity of resorting to violence in the event of a defeat at the polls? Did not these leaders go so far as solemnly to condemn violence, for political, moral, or religious ends?

"Oh, obviously."

Would any one of those theologians who to-day seek to justify Civil War, by arguments borrowed from Aquinas, then have approved the public use of them, even as the merest hypotheses?

Even a week before the last election, would you have considered it wise to declare that the male and female faithful might use such methods with the blessing of their bishops, in case of defeat?

"What do you take us for—silly fools?"

No—not even for cunning ones. Since after all, you had the power in your hands during the years which led up to this wretched business. The President of the Spanish Republic was one of your people. So was Leroux, the War Minister, who offered Gil Roblès the rather gangrened remains of what used to be the radical party. Oh, of course, you never refuse a welcome to the prodigal son, provided he can pay for his own fatted calf! I'll give you that much. In

any case, you'd got them where you wanted them, if you don't mind my saying so. Well, and what happened then? Only a few weeks after your paternal government had been kicked out, things were already in such a state that a major operation appeared necessary. Don't you think that's a little odd? Were you governing—or weren't you?

"We were making the best of things."

'Was that the best you could do, my little innocent Machiavellis? After having given your full approval to the fall of the first dictatorship, then of the monarchy, you produced a last rallying cry, you were red-hot democrats, and not all the water in wretched Spain, which in any case is an insufficient supply, would have been enough to put you out. There's no need for anyone who doubts this to learn Spanish. He need only turn the files of the French *Etudes*<sup>16</sup>, for instance, in which the wise Jesuits of the Rue Monsieur<sup>17</sup> hail the setting-up of the new Republic. Alas, your conception of policy has always been heavily sentimental. You like power, but you won't take its necessary risks. Just tell me this: did you realize there was going to be a civil war, yes or no? If you didn't, you were stupid; if you did realize, why didn't you follow the famous slogan and show your strength, in order not to have to use it? I repeat, Señor Gil Roblès was War Minister. If at that time I could have questioned him, I have no doubt that after taking counsel of the wise and pious Cardinal Goma, he would have said to me with his hand on his heart: 'What do you suppose I am? I could never use illegal methods!' And no doubt the pious Cardinal would have added:

‘When law becomes martial-law, then of course we can bless it.’

Of course you can. You can always bless. So your choice is between governing and blessing. Democracies don't seem to make you very happy. But surely all of you know that the natural play of forces in a democracy puts into power alternately the strongest and the most cunning. If you had any sense of humour—that is to say a little less pride—the sight of yourselves distributing unctuous blessings on a game as brutal as Whisky-Poker would make you laugh. Such a brutal game that not all your unctuousness can keep abreast with its savage pacc. While you smile benignly, and burble texts which sanctify the indisputable right of the strongest, the most artful is already in power giving you such a nasty look that you have to fade out as soon as possible, and rush to your libraries to wring from these very same texts some swcating apology for low cunning. You go back solemnly with these only to offer them to the bully, who, while your back was turned, has again become lawful. Why the devil—yes, why the devil!—insist on having the mayor and parson along to regularize nights or hours of such quick fornication?

In the same way it seems to me better not to insist on a definition of Holy Warfare—the University of Paris has already had all that out with Joan of Arc, and those doctors, though benign by profession, were not long in using drastic means. Since they could not consign to the flames the writings of the little shepherdess, who in any case had never learnt to write,

they consigned the little shepherdess herself, in exactly the same way, after all, as Spanish Communists set fire to churches.

Have mercy on incendiaries, O Lord!

☞ ☞ Once again I see that dazzling Sunday morning. The sea, the gentle sea of Palma, had not one wrinkle. The lane from the village of Porto-Pi to the main road was still immersed in blue shadows. As in the last chapter but one of *The Diary of a Country Priest*, my tall red motor-bicycle, gleaming in the sun, purred beneath me like a baby aeroplane. I stopped at a petrol-pump two miles further on. The iron shutters of the garage were only half up.

'Surely you're not going into town this morning?' asked the garage-owner.

'Yes, I am. As far as Sant' Eulalia, for seven o'clock mass.'

'You go home,' he said. 'They're fighting over there.'

Only then did I notice the road was empty. April-the-fourteenth road was likewise empty. Below Tereno that road suddenly turns, and you find yourself at the beginning of the interminable quais, reserved for fishing-boats, along the old rampart walls where Saracen flags once used to fly.

'Halt!'

I can still hear the tearing crescendo of my brakes in the solemn quiet. There were five or six men surrounding me, streaming with perspiration, their guns at the ready.

'You watch your step,' I said in my marvellous Spanish. 'I'm Yves's dad.'

'Get on one side, sir. Don't stop in the firing-line,' a lieutenant of the *Phalange* called to me from a distance. His men deployed behind the trees on the lower side of the road. The firing-line? . . .

At the end, at the very end of the huge quai, so inordinately empty, at a distance which had never appeared to me so great—and has never seemed so great since—I saw the gaping doors of the cavalry headquarters.

'My poor lad,' I said to the lieutenant, 'you'll never be able to stand up to regulars with a lot like that.'

I confess the republican army inspired me with no confidence. I feared some fresh betrayal.

'The regulars are with us,' said the lieutenant.

✂ ✂ If I have in any degree benefited from my experiences in Spain, I think it is because I approached them without prejudice of any kind. Though I haven't an astute mind, in the sense given to the word by diplomatic priests, I am no simpleton. I was never tempted, for instance, to regard the republicans of Spain as 'Royalists'. For their 'loyalty' in the same way as that of their adversaries, was definitely circumstantial. If it comes to loyalty, as M. Céline<sup>18</sup> would say, I lump all those folk together. Their political schemes haven't the slightest interest for me. The world is in need of honour. It is *honour* which the world lacks. The world has all it requires, and rejoices in nothing, because it has no honour. The world has lost all self-esteem. And no sensible man would ever have the irrelevant notion of learning the laws of honour from Machiavelli or Lenin. For my

part, I would consider it just as foolish to go to the Casuists. Honour is an Absolute. It has nothing in common with doctrinaires of the Relative.

Time was when the Spanish republicans had no scruples in using felonious generals against the Monarchy; that these felons should now turn on them seemed to me a kind of justice. So on principle, I had nothing against a *coup d'état* on the part of the *Phalange*.

I thought I knew—I still think I know—the legitimate function, the specific function of revolutions, whether they be fascist or communist. Hitler, Stalin, or Mussolini were well aware that dictatorship alone could defeat the avarice of the middle classes, an avarice which has no longer any object, for the poor things cling to privileges that have lost the very marrow of nourishment: they are liable to die of hunger with teeth fastened on a bone about as substantial as a ball of ivory.

It is not the use of force which seems to me iniquitous, but the state of mind concerning it: the religion of Force at the service of a Totalitarian State or Dictatorship, not as a means, but as an end in itself.

My illusions on the enterprise of General Franco did not last long—two or three weeks—but while they lasted I conscientiously endeavoured to get over the disgust which some of the men and means inspired in me. To tell the truth, when the first Italian planes came over, I wasn't altogether sorry. When the Italian consul came to see me—he had been told by a faithful Roman friend of the danger to my family, and particularly to my son, in the event of a sudden attack by the Catalan Militia, which had just landed at Porto Christo—when he courteously told me of his government's



solicitude, I thanked him warmly, although by then he had come too late, and I had firmly decided to take no sides and accept no assistance. I was prepared for every kind of violence. I know what the violence of the Violent can be. If you watch it coldly, it may horrify, but it never disgusts. I knew what the boys I was friends with might be capable of, if they had come up against a determined adversary.

But all they came up against was a terrorized population.

The population of Majorca has always been noted for its absolute indifference to politics. In the days of the *Carlistes* and the *Cristinos*<sup>19</sup>, Georges Sand tells us how they welcomed with equal unconcern the refugees of either side. The rising of Catalonia in 1934, near though it was, aroused no echo. According to the head of the *Phalange*, you could not have found a hundred Communists in the whole island. Where could the Party have got them from? It is a country of small market-gardening, of olives, oranges and almonds, without industry, without factories. My son attended every 'propaganda' meeting there was, for a whole year, and neither he nor his companions encountered anything more serious than a punch on the nose. I declare on oath that during the months preceding the civil war there was no attempt of any kind made against persons or belongings.

'There was killing in Spain,' you say. 'A hundred and thirty-five political assassinations between March and July 1936.' I agree. So Fascist terrorism could at a pinch be regarded as a revenge, though it were blind and ferocious and included so many innocent. *But in Majorca* there were no crimes to avenge, so it

could only have been a preventative action, the systematic extermination of suspects.

The majority of legal sentences by the military tribunals of Majorca—I shall refer later to the executions without any trial, of which there were many more—were merely for *desafeccion al movimiento salvador*: Disloyalty to the Salvation movement, expressed in words or gestures alone. A family of four—a good middle-class family, consisting of father, mother and two sons aged sixteen and nineteen respectively, were condemned to death on the evidence of a few witnesses who insisted they saw them cheer a few Catalan planes that flew over their garden. The American consul intervened later, and saved the woman's life, who was a native of Porto Rico.

Perhaps you may suggest that the records of Fouquier-Tinville<sup>20</sup> contain many examples of this conception of revolutionary justice. Which is precisely why the name of Fouquier-Tinville remains one of the most hideous in history.

☛ ☛ Maybe this last remark will prey on the minds of many decent people whose mirror reveals no likeness to Fouquier-Tinville. Don't you be too sure. We are always too sure of ourselves. Three weeks' innocent revelry at Montmartre can sometimes re-awaken in a respectable gentleman over fifty, living quietly on his investments in the provinces, the vicious adolescent he had never given a thought to for years, and believed to be dead. The smell of blood, also, can suddenly go to the head of that type of person. I saw many strange things. I saw a woman of thirty-

five, appertaining to the inoffensive category which over there we call *beata*, living peacefully in the bosom of her family after an interrupted novitiate, spending among the poor whatever time she did not spend in church, show sudden signs of incomprehensible nervous terror, speak of possible 'reprisals', and refuse to go out alone. A very dear friend, whom I cannot name here, took pity on her, and in order to reassure her, offered her shelter. A little later the devotee decided to return home. The day she was leaving, her charitable hostess questioned her affectionately:

'Come, child, what have you to fear? You're one of God's little lambs—who could possibly wish out of the way such a harmless creature as you?'

'Harmless? That's all you know! You don't think me capable of serving Religion. Everybody thinks as you do, and nobody's frightened of me. Well—you can find out for yourself. I had eight men shot, madame. . . .'

✂ ✂ Yes, I was privileged to witness many strange things. I know at Palma a young man of exquisite breeding, of most affable simplicity, most cordial, at one time a general favourite. His small aristocratic hand holds in its soft dimpled palm the secret of a hundred deaths, maybe. . . . A lady called on him one day and saw a magnificent rose on his drawing-room table.

'Are you admiring that rose, my dear?'

'Why, yes. . . ?'

'You would admire it still more if you knew where it came from.'

‘How do you expect me to know?’

‘I took it from the cell of Madame M——, whom we executed this morning.’

✿ ✿ The Right Wing of Spain were no fools—let us give them their due. You may say they had no time to make plans. Do you take me for a half-wit? From the elections in March to the *Pronunciamento*<sup>21</sup> of July 19, were just three and a half months. A child would understand that thirteen poor weeks would certainly never have sufficed for the organized revolt of the army and civil guard. Unless you fancy General Franco confined himself to a last-minute telegram to his accomplices: ‘Rebelling to-morrow. What side are you on?’ Reply paid, of course. And I suppose Signor Mussolini and Herr Hitler were merely rung up the day Calvo Sotelo<sup>22</sup> was assassinated!

Though I am still prepared to believe that the episcopate were, until the last, actually kept in ignorance of what so many familiar personalities were planning, and indeed the latter showed very little reliance in the discretion of their lordships! Anyhow, why should they protest against the suggestion that they assisted in advance, with their prayers and good wishes, such a holy war—*nuestra santa guerra*?

Where would be the harm?

Oh, no, they were no fools, the Right Wing of Spain. Until the last minute they made it known how they were against all violence. The *Phalange*, who were in the habit of dosing their adversaries with castor-oil, were considered—until the 19th of July 1936—so unpardonable, that when a young member of

seventeen was killed almost under my eyes on the very morning of the *coup d'état*, the personage whom good manners compel me to call His Excellency the Archbishop of Majorca, after much hesitation in granting a 'Christian' burial to this violent young man—he that takes the sword shall perish by the sword—finally confined himself to forbidding his priests to wear surplices for the occasion.

Six weeks later, as I was seeing my son back to the outposts on my motor-bicycle, I found the brother of the dead lad stretched across the road to Porto-Christo, cold already under a shroud of flies. The night before, two hundred inhabitants of the next small town Manacor, had been dragged from their beds in the middle of the night, driven in batches to the cemetery, and shot down and burnt in a heap a little further on. The personage whom good manners require that I should refer to as Archbishop, had sent a priest round, who stood with his boots paddling in blood, distributing absolutions between the shootings.

I shall not enlarge on the details of this religious and military manifestation, in order to spare, as far as possible, the susceptibilities of our heroic French counter-revolutionaries, who must be brothers of those whom my wife and I saw clear out of the island, at the first suggestion of hypothetical invasion—like the cowards they were.

I merely wish to state that this massacre of defenceless people provoked not one word of reproof, not even the mildest reservation from ecclesiastical authorities, who concentrated on the organization of thanksgiving processions. You may well believe that from then onwards any reference to castor-oil would have been

rather out of place. The second Barbara lad was given a grand funeral, and the town having decided to name a street after the two brothers, the new name-plate was inaugurated and blessed by the personage whom good manners still oblige me to call: His Excellency the Archbishop of Palma!

✂ ✂ I know these truths will shock a small number of genuine people. But the distress I am about to relate will shock them a hundredfold.

This 'Crusade' has been going on for two years, so I don't think I can be accused of having shown too great haste in attempting to draw the true face of it, the face I saw, and no other. Is it not the vindicators who are in too much of a hurry? The sheer fact of prolongation is surely proof enough that they mistook its real nature. How is it that the united efforts of Germany and Italy have not yet obtained a decisive victory?

"Spain must have been even more corrupt than we imagined!"

Maybe. Yet, is it not the same Spain which gave your Catholic Ceda<sup>23</sup> a majority in the Cortez in 1934? You must be going backwards instead of forwards.

"We fear so."

Then your methods can't be worth much.

Surely if so much bloodshed has not given to this unfortunate country one Christian more, I would be justified in warning you against those Italian writers who would summon us to go crusading behind leaders who resemble—like brothers—the initiators of the *Movimento*? But it isn't a matter of a Christian more

or less. I fear worse. I fear far worse, for the Church. Of course the Spanish episcopate thought they had hold of the right end of the stick, after the taking of Bilbao. Were they not mistaken? Had their lordships asked my opinion just then, I should have answered:

‘Be careful. You’ll always have time enough to take sides. At one time ecclesiastics were nervous of becoming compromised by too great adherence to kings who were threatened by all-powerful republics. Nowadays these same democratic republics compromise their safety with dictators. Kings on the whole have never borne them a grudge. I wonder whether democracies will be equally kind. Irony is not appreciated by the people.’

✍ ✍ The revolutionary Terror in Spain presents no fresh problem. It is obvious that in Catalonia, for instance, the rising of the army and police made way for slaughterers.

Supposing the military governor of Paris took it into his head to lead an insurrection. And supposing M. Chautemps, in self-defence, unwisely gave arms to the ‘man in the street’. When the sedition was over, by what means would he be able to keep in check his dangerous allies? The rabble will always be rabble. We know it of old. “We must defeat it.” No doubt. But you are not free to repress it as you think fit. For you stand for Order and the State. Only, you see, neither Order nor the State belong to you. They are the bequest of those who are no more, the heritage of those who are to come. You do not live in your own

house, but in the house of all, which Christ has blessed. If you destroy it under the pretext of burying in the ruins those who pillage it, where shall your children sleep?

I fear such considerations may seem to you to be inspired by absurd idealism. All the worse for you. They should be familiar to the royalists of France, if they had not turned into mediocre intellectuals, insufferable pamphleteers. All the worse for them! The respect our Princes used to feel for the ancestral domain, their reluctance to defend it against their people, the final look round on the day of abdication, eyes full of love and forethought, eyes of legitimate ownership resting at the last on so many precious, fragile things that one prefers to give up rather than see them destroyed—at Majorca suddenly I understood the significance of it.

✂ ✂ To whomsoever shall accuse me of attacking ecclesiastics, who have already expiated with so much blood their errors and sins, I could reply that it would not otherwise be easy to forewarn them against such errors and sins. It is easy enough nowadays to say the Inquisition was a political weapon in the hands of Spanish kings, but the most brazen of church-goers could not deny that its contemporaries had no idea of it. Had I in the sixteenth century advanced such a theory at the famous University of Salamanca, I should have been regarded as a seditious influence, and perhaps burnt at the stake. Supposing this 'Crusade' should be unsuccessful? You will read in a further history of the Church that the collective note



of the Spanish Episcopate was but an outburst of zeal on the part of their lordships, a regrettable impulse which in no way affects general principles. M. Paul Claudel<sup>24</sup> will disapprove of such a statement. But I've had enough of that absurd humbug. Who knows, the author of the future history of the Church may perhaps use these pages to make good his point, and prove that such persons had *not* unanimous Catholic support.

✎ ✎ Shall I tell you what I think? Terrorism seems to me inseparable from all havoc, because of all powers of destruction, terrorism is the most far-reaching, pierces the deepest, touches the roots of the soul. When I see you pour such an acid over an arm or leg of Christianity—even though it be gangrened—I know that you will burn it right up, that you will burn it to the last fibre, to the final seed.

Not that I am beyond passions any more than you! I defy them as little as possible, for fear they devour me. But I call them by their name—I *name* them. I know perfectly well that it was the Spirit of Fear and the Spirit of Vengeance—and the latter is perhaps no more than the final manifestation of Fear—inspired the Counter-Revolution in Spain. That such a feeling could have inspired it does not surprise me. But that it should for so long have sustained it—there is our problem!

Therefore I clearly state that the Reign of Terror in Spain would long since have burnt itself out, were it not that the more or less open, more or less conscious endorsement of priests and church-goers had finally succeeded in endowing it with a religious aspect.

✎ ✎ Once again let it be known that I am not writing this in order either to astonish or convince. I have no pretensions of teaching wisdom to others, having been unable to direct my own poor share of life without many mistakes. This is no carefully thought-out plan of re-organization. The spectacle of injustice shatters me, I know, but that is probably because it awakens consciousness of the degree of injustice to which I myself might attain. Otherwise I should strive to await in peace, like the saints, our fathers, the Advent of the Kingdom of God. Yes, and I should accept injustice, all injustice, so long as I had the strength. But made as I am, I could only accept it through cowardice, though I might mask my cowardice with some flattering name, such as 'scepticism', for I don't fancy myself capable of profaning the divine name of Charity.

If I happen to hold the Church responsible, it is not in the absurd ambition of reforming it. I don't consider the Church capable of human reformation, at all events in the manner of Luther or Lamennais.<sup>25</sup> I don't wish the Church to be perfect, for the Church is a living thing. Like the most lowly, the most destitute of her sons, the Church struggles haltingly from this world into the next; she sins and expiates and whosoever shall turn their eyes from her splendour will hear her praying and sobbing with the rest of us, in the darkness. Therefore why hold her responsible? Because she is always responsible. It is from her that I receive all, and nothing can touch me except through her. This offence of hers has pierced my soul, has struck at the very roots of my hope. Or let us rather say that there can be no other offence but the one she

lets loose on the world. I protect myself against this offence by the only means within my power, that of trying to understand. Perhaps I should have ignored it. But I am not speaking in the name of saints, but in the name of decent people, my brothers. Were not sinners entrusted to you? Well, the world is now full of poor creatures you have deceived. Yet not one of us would dream of casting the fact in your teeth, if you had the humility to recognize it. We don't charge you with your faults. It is not on your faults that we splinter our souls, but on your pride.

You will no doubt answer that, pride or no pride, you dispose of sacraments opening the way to eternal life, sacraments which you would not refuse to those who were in a fit state to receive them. What more do we want?

Alas, we would like to be able to love.

### III

☞ ☞ Had I returned from Spain with the intentions of a pamphleteer, I would have hastened to present to the public eye a picture of the Civil War likely to stir feelings and perhaps consciences, too. Yet I fancy I would not have had the heart to carry out this intention. The public is too fond of horror, and if you wish to speak to the soul of it, better not have torture chambers as frame for your talk, lest you observe the slow dawning in dreamy eyes of something quite different from indignation, or any state of mind.

☞ ☞ If you think the word Terrorism is going too far, find another; it makes no difference to me. Perhaps you endow it with an earthquake quality, so that it invokes fires and crumbling homes, bodies lacerated by the rabble. Yet the Terror of which I speak could provide no such images, precisely because the organizers are the kind for whom good behaviour in the street is of absolute necessity. It is childish to think of a killer in the guise of a melodrama brigand. Maximilian Robespierre was a very respectable bourgeois, a deist and a stern moralist. You may be sure he would have preferred the assistance of middle-class people like himself in preference to Danton's sinister Carmagnoles. If he had been able to avail himself of

a well-disciplined army, an unimpeachable police-force, an undisturbed bench, a willing clergy, and a painstaking organization, he would have killed just as many people—he would even have killed far more people—without upsetting the stage-coach, postal and road-making services.

It is truly iniquitous to estimate the sufferings of civil war, on either side, by the same exterior signs. The Reign of Terror of the Catholic kings in Flanders caused more blood to flow than any Jacquerie<sup>26</sup>. The sacking of a town by the mob, though it cost not one life, will always be a savage spectacle. But when marine officers called on me at Palma, they remarked on the clean roads, the punctual trams, and so on.

‘Why,’ they exclaimed, ‘business as usual, people about in the streets—and you say there’s killing going on? What nonsense!’

They didn’t realize that any tradesman who closed down, closed down at his peril. They didn’t know that the relatives of the executed were not allowed to go into mourning, thanks to the vigilance of a ‘moral welfare’ organization. How can you expect the outside appearance of a town to be affected, just because the staff of its prisons is double, treble, ten times, a hundred times what it was? The discreet slaughter of fifteen or twenty wretched people per day, will not prevent tramways from running to schedule, cafés from being full, or churches resounding with the ‘Te Deum’.

✎ ✎ For my part, I call Terrorism any régime wherein citizens are outside the protection of the law, with life or death depending on the whim of those in

power. I call Terrorism any system of suspects. It was such a régime that I witnessed for eight months. Or rather, it took me ten months to discover the workings of it cog, by cog. This is a statement, an affirmation. I don't insist on being believed. I know that all will be known one day—to-morrow, the next day, who cares? His Lordship the Bishop of Palma, for instance, knows as much as I, more than I. I have always thought that our Holy Father the Pope, tormented, so it is said, by the problem of the civil war in Spain, would be well advised to cross-examine that dignitary upon oath.

✎ ✎ What is a régime of suspects? It is a régime by which those in power deem it legal and fair not merely to exaggerate immensely the significance of certain delinquencies, in order to get rid of the delinquents under the thrust of martial law (the closed fist means death), but even to exterminate 'dangerous people' on suspicion, which means those suspected of becoming dangerous elements. In order to track down such persons, the assistance of informers is essential. So a régime of suspects is also a régime of secret accusations.

✎ ✎ Easy enough to put down in black and white. But one must see. One must understand. Here was a small island, so peaceful, nestling amid almond-trees, orange-groves, vineyards. Its capital is of no more consequence than any ancient town of our French provinces. The next largest town, Soller, is more like

a village. Isolated hamlets stuck along mountain-sides or scattered in the plains have no communication save a few bad roads and occasional panting, broken-down lorries. Each of those villages is a closed-in world with its two parties: 'Priests' and 'Intellectuals'. (The workmen half-heartedly belong to the 'Intellectuals'.) There remains the 'Lord of the Manor', who is only on view on grand occasions, but there isn't a face he doesn't know, and he has long since made up his mind about the blackguards, who are generally to be seen in company of the priest, his fellow-ruler. But none of it matters. Owing to the easy-going charm of Spanish customs, they all live in harmony and dance with each other on feast days.

Overnight, or very nearly, each of those villages had its own search-committee, a secret honorary tribunal, generally thus composed: the land-owning bourgeois (or his bailiff), the sacristan, the priest's housekeeper, a few law-abiding peasants and their wives, and finally the young men hastily recruited by the new *Phalange*, too often converted but the day before, eager to pledge themselves, drunk with the horror that a blue shirt and a red tasselled cap can suddenly inspire in ignorant minds.

✂ ✂ I have stated it once, I shall state it again: 500 *Phalangistas* on July 17th; 15,000 a few weeks later; then 22,000. Far from controlling this lightning recruitment, military authority assists it in every way, for they have a plan. When the time comes, when the job is done, nothing will be easier than to disarm a multitude which by sheer weight of numbers

has smashed down the ancient framework, to whom another, cut to its measure, has been supplied: government by police. After which it can be broken up and dispersed in the general mass. The purge will be over.

For purge is the last word of this war; everybody knows it, or is beginning to know it, or will know it soon. The 'Get-it-over' slogan which abject impostors interpret more or less as 'Deliver the tomb of Our Lord', never meant anything but systematic wiping out of dangerous elements, or those suspected of becoming so. Nothing surprising in that. Such was in 1871, precisely the unanimous desire of the people of Versailles. Two centuries before the French Revolution, the same formulae were used to justify the massacres in the prisons after Saint Bartholomew. In a letter to the Pope, Catherine de Medici compared it to the victory of Lepanto,<sup>27</sup> and the same night, Rome celebrated with rockets and illuminations.

All reigns of Terror are alike, all are of the same origin; you will not get me to distinguish between them. I have seen too much, I know men too well, and I am too old now. Fear disgusts me in everybody, and behind all the fine talk of those butchers, lies fear, and only fear. Massacres are due to fear, hate is but an alibi.

✍ ✍ The purge at Majorca had three rather different phases, plus a preparatory stage. In the course of the latter there were certainly a few summary executions, in private houses, but they retained—or appeared to retain—an aspect of personal vengeance more or less deplored by all, of which details were



whispered in secret. Then appeared the General Count Rossi.

Of course the new-comer was neither a general nor a count, but an Italian official belonging to the Black Shirts. One morning we saw him disembark his scarlet racing-car. First he called on the military governor appointed by General Godet. The governor and his officials received him politely. Emphasizing his remarks with thumps upon the table, he announced himself as the herald of true Fascism. A few days later the general and his staff took up their abode in the prison of San Carlos, and Count Rossi was in control of the *Phalange*.

In black robes, with a huge white cross on his chest, he tore round the villages, driving his racing-car himself; other cars, crammed with men armed to the teeth, strove to keep up with him in a cloud of dust. Every morning the papers told of these oratorical excursions. Accompanied by the alcalde and the priest, in a strange mixed jargon of Spanish, Italian and Majorcan dialect, he announced the 'Crusade'.

In all fairness let it be said that the Italian government possessed in Palma some less glaring agents than this gigantic brute, who asserted one day at the table of a distinguished lady of Palma—whilst wiping his fingers on the tablecloth—that he required at least 'one woman per day'.

But the particular mission entrusted him was marvellously suited to his gifts; the organizing of Terrorism.

✚ ✚ From that time, every night, gangs of his own

recruiting commenced operations in the villages and in the very suburbs of Palma. Where these gentlemen were most effective, there was barely any outward change. Always the same gentle knock at the door of a comfortable flat or a workman's cottage, the same crunching of steps in the darkness of the garden, or the same whispering of death on the landing, to which the victim listens from the other side of the wall, his ear to the keyhole, and anguish pinching his heart. 'Follow us.' The same words to the distracted woman; trembling hands struggling into well-worn clothes that a few minutes earlier had been discarded for the night, and the purr of the engine out there in the road. 'Don't wake the kids—what's the use? You're taking me to prison aren't you, señor?'

'*Perfectamente,*' answers the killer, who sometimes is under twenty.

You climb into the lorry where you find two or three other fellows you know, sombre and resigned as yourself, with uncertain eyes. . . . *Hombre!* A screech of brakes and the lorry sets off. A few moments of hope whilst it still keeps to the main road. But now it is slowing down, turning, goes jolting along a hollow earthen pathway.

'Get down!'

You get down, you line up, you press your lips to a medal—or merely to your own thumb nail.

*Bang! Bang! Bang!*

The bodies are piled against a bank, where the grave-digger will find them next day, their heads burst open, and their necks resting on a hideous cushion of black coagulated blood. I say the grave-digger, because all this has been carefully arranged to take place not

far from a cemetery. The alcade will record in his register: 'So-and-So, So-and-So, So-and-So, died of congestion of the brain.'

✎ ✎ The first phase of the purge lasted four months, in the course of which this foreigner, who was mainly responsible for the slaughter, made a point of being well to the fore in all religious manifestations. He was usually supported by a chaplain picked up on the spot, in army-breeches and top-boots, a white cross on his chest and pistols stuck in his belt. (That particular priest has since been shot by his own side.)

None would have dared question the discretionary powers of the Italian general. I remember one unhappy priest who humbly begged of him to spare the lives of three young women of Mexican origin, whom he deemed to be without malice, after hearing their confession.

'Right,' said the count. 'I'll sleep on it.' The following morning he had his men shoot them down.

✎ ✎ Thus, until December, the hollow pathways of the Island, round the cemeteries, regularly received their deathly harvest of 'wrong thinkers'. Workmen, peasants, and middle classes too—chemists, lawyers. One day as I was asking a doctor friend of mine for a negative taken some time previously by his colleague, a radiologist—the only one in Palma—he smiled and said: 'I wonder what's happened to the apparatus? . . . Poor old X. . . . he was taken for a ride the other evening.'

These facts are common knowledge.

✎ ✎ When the purging of the homes was nearly over, there were the prisons to deal with. You can imagine how crammed full they were! And the concentration camps! And the disarmed ships! Sinister hulks guarded night and day, with the grim ray of a searchlight—by way of extra precaution—sweeping backwards and forwards across them all night. Alas, I could see it from my bed.

The second phase was the purging of these prisons.

✎ ✎ A large number of suspects, both men and women, escaped martial law for lack of any shred of evidence against them on which a court-martial could convict. So they began setting them free in groups, according to their birth-place.

But half-way, the car-load would be emptied into a ditch.

✎ ✎ I know. . . you don't wish me to go on. How many dead? Fifty? A hundred? Five hundred? The figure I shall tell you was given to me by one of the heads of the Palma Crusade. (The evaluation of the people is a very different one: never mind that.) Early in March 1937, after seven months' civil war, there were three thousand assassinations of this kind. Seven months are two hundred and ten days, which means an average of fifteen executions a day. Let me remind you that this tiny island can easily be crossed

in two hours, from one end to the other. So that any inquisitive person with a car, if he took the trouble, could successfully wager that he would witness the blowing-out of fifteen wrong-thinking brains per day. These figures are not unknown to his Lordship the Archbishop of Majorca.

✎ ✎ You may hate to read of this. Believe me, I hate to write of it. Above all, I hated the sound and sight of it. We stuck it out, my wife and I, not through bravado, not even hoping to be of much use—there was so little we could do, after all—but rather out of a deep sense of solidarity towards a group of decent people, of which there were more each day, who had known our hopes and illusions, stubbornly held their ground against overwhelming evidence, and now finally shared in our sorrow. They were not free, as we were. I remember those young Phalangistas, those old priests—one of them for having spoken his mind too freely was made to swallow, on pain of death, a litre of castor-oil. Had I lived there among the Left, it is possible that their methods of protest might have awakened in me certain partisan reflexes which one is not always able to control. But disillusion, distress, pity and shame, bind one far more closely than revolt or hate. You arise wearily from your bed, you are on your way, and there, in the street, at a café table, on the church steps, is one whom you thought was on the side of the killers, and he suddenly cries out to you, with eyes full of tears:

‘I’ve had enough! I can’t go on! Look—look what they’ve done now!’

✎ ✎ The mayor of a small town was hidden by his wife in a tank. At each sign of danger the poor fellow crouched down in a sort of nook, a few inches from the still water. They dragged him out one December night, shaking with fever. They took him to the cemetery and put a bullet in his belly. Then as he was in no haste to die, his executioners who were drinking a few steps away, returned a little tight, with the empty bottle of brandy, thrust it in the mouth of the dying man, and smashed it on his head.

These facts, I insist, are known to all. I fear no contradiction. The atmosphere of Terrorism is not what you think. At first it is like some gigantic misunderstanding, mixing everything up, inextricably entangling good and evil, innocent and guilty, enthusiasm and cruelty. Can I believe my eyes? Can I have understood. . . ? They say it'll soon be over, that it *is* over. We breathe again. We breathe until the next killing, which cuts us short. Time passes, passes. . . . And then? How can I explain it? Priests, soldiers, that banner of gold and black—'neither gold could buy it, nor blood could sell it. . . .'

It is a cruel thing when what you were born to love becomes degraded before your eyes.

✎ ✎ Of course the French newspapers were of the *greatest* comfort at these times! When week by week Fascist aeroplanes, blessed by the Archbishop of Palma, increase and multiply along coasts at one time disarmed, and now bristling with batteries. When officers of the Italian navy are heard publicly boasting in cafés of the bombardment of Malaga, it is certainly

stimulating to be able to read in one's native language the monotonous diatribes of a Press squatting in each Pyrenean frontier station, eyes to the keyhole of every water-closet, scribbling convulsive notes on toilet-paper. Never—never once, in seven long months, the least mention of Italian or German shortcomings! Damn it all—these people don't often agree so fervently! But since the campaign in Abyssinia they have spoken with one voice of solidarity in favour of the new Italian Empire. The 'facts' to which these patriots appeal tally so exactly with the articles of Italian or Spanish publicists, that they might have been specially made to measure. Isn't it odd? And yet there can't be a single Frenchman who has lived six months beyond the Pyrenees, without becoming aware of the age-old hatred which the Spanish Right Wing, especially the army and the clergy, entertains for our country. This hatred was often expressed in the last war. 'Only the mob and I like France,' said Alfonso. In our own country it is rather hard to find out how seriously one need take the patriotic defeatism of our ultra-patriots. I fancy the most embittered among these gentlemen would have been annoyed by the scornful remarks with which propaganda embellished its articles.

I can still hear the voice of that commandant, who said to me one evening at Manacor—we were being bombarded by the Republican cruiser *Libertad*—and in his simple way he probably hoped to give me pleasure; in any case he said in pigeon-French, but in very male and brotherly accents:

'What else d'you expect, sir, our two countries are a couple of dirty bitches.'

He himself was a Catalan.

✎ ✎ I remained in Majorca as long as I could, because there I looked the enemies of my country in the face. And this humble testimony must have been of some use, for I had no links with the Reds there (or elsewhere), was known to all as a Catholic and a royalist, and—of small account though I may be—I stood for France. An eternal France. One that has survived the Armagnacs and the Bourguignons, the Ligueurs and the Huguenots; one that has survived all 'Fronts' of varying shapes and sizes, because her instinct is fair and free; and she has but one home, her house, the House of France, and once we cross that threshold we are all equal, children of the same mother. With all due respect to the Stupid, France will only be despised in the world when she has finally lost her own self-esteem. Whosoever speaks not as a politician, but as a Frenchman, is sure to be understood.

Everybody in Palma knew that my son was a lieutenant in the *Phalange*, and I was often seen at mass. For months I had been friendly with insurgent leaders who were feared by all the suspects. And yet people I hardly knew spoke freely to me, when the slightest indiscretion on my part would have cost their liberty, or their lives. I'll tell you why it was. It was because it is still known in the world that a Frenchman doesn't let himself become a policeman's pawn—that's why. Because a Frenchman is a free man.

But General Franco's hangers-on probably never thought of that.



✎ ✎ You mustn't imagine that the purging of the prisons put a sudden stop to the purging activities in the homes—it merely slowed it down. The scattered villages had a short respite, as most attention was now confined to the immediate suburbs of Palma. But the object the military authorities had in view, was not so easily achieved. The relatives of the dead had at one time but a very short way to go, to identify them. Now an expensive journey was necessary and formalities which became nauseating on account of the huge number of petitioners, and the fact that the prison registers rarely tallied with the grave-digger's records, giving rise to the most revolting misapprehensions. As a last shift—since the common graves revealed no secrets—families were invited by a kindly official to search among the piles of clothing and see if they could discover a pair of pants or a shirt that looked familiar. . . .

✎ ✎ I strive to record this as simply as possible. I shall add nothing for the benefit of those who might think me capable of making statements without proof, or on mere hearsay. I am not denouncing a more or less hypothetical Mafia<sup>28</sup>. These facts are public property. Approved by the majority, disapproved by a few, they were never once questioned. Alas, it would require many pages to explain that in the end they ceased to horrify. They were beyond the pale of reason or horror, and sensitivity grew torpid, as though stunned. Victims and executioners became reconciled in the same drugged fatalism. Yes, the civil war only filled me with real fear, the day I caught

myself almost unconsciously breathing, without nausea, its stale reek of blood.

May God have pity upon us all!

✿ ✿ I could give many examples of this state of apathy—in the exact sense of the word. But I will confine myself to recording one Press-interview with some nuns of Porto Christo, which appeared *in extenso* in all the Palma newspapers: *El Ora*, *el Almudaina* (sub-title: *Diario Catolico*), *Ultima Hora*. The diminutive town of Porto Christo was the landing-place of the Catalonian troops in August 1936. Actually they were never able to get any further, and re-embarked six weeks later. These nuns ran a boarding-school which at that time of the year was deserted. The Mother Superior spoke with great animation of the arrival of the 'Reds', of the first contact of her petrified novices with the Barcelona militia, who brutally ordered them to prepare beds for the wounded. In the midst of the confusion appeared a South American, a kind of giant, pointing a gun and introducing himself thus: 'My sisters, I am a Catholic and a Communist. I'll blow out the brains of the first man who doesn't treat you with respect.'

For two days he exerted himself to the utmost, helped them to bandage the wounded, of which there were ever-increasing numbers, and in rare moments of leisure would indulge in a teasing controversy with the Mother Superior, which she described to the reporter in a manner both humorous and appealing.

At last came the dawn of the third day, and the nun tells the climax of her adventure thus:

‘Suddenly we heard guns outside. The wounded became uneasy, the militia rushed out; we threw ourselves on our knees and prayed to Heaven to assist our liberators. Then we heard cries of *Viva España, Arriba España*, and the doors burst open. What more can I say? *Our brave soldiers entered from all sides and settled accounts with the wounded! The South-American was killed last!*’

✂ ✂ A few days later I expressed surprise to the journalist who was responsible for this article, and the following day he published a laborious justification of which I quote the following: ‘Some generous spirits think they should protest against the necessities of this holy war. But those who are at war must conform to its laws. And surely the first law of warfare is: *Vae Victis!*’

✂ ✂ The military authorities now became uneasy at the growing disgust surrounding them, which the animosity of the *Phalange*—all arms and leaders had suddenly been confiscated from them—was likely to render dangerous, so they adopted a third method of purging, the most discreet of all. Here it is, in all its simplicity:

Prisoners deemed undesirable received one morning notice of their discharge, together with a certificate of wrongful arrest. They signed the gaol book, gave a receipt for objects confiscated, tied up their bundle of belongings, in short went through every formality, one by one, required to free the prison ad-

ministration from any further liability. At two o'clock in the morning they were set free, in couples. That is to say they found themselves outside the doors in a deserted road, facing a lorry and surrounded by men covering them with revolvers.

'Silence. We're taking you home.'

They were taken straight to the cemetery.

✎ ✎ The person whom good manners suggest that I should refer to as His Lordship the Archbishop of Majorca, signed the collective letter of the Spanish Episcopate. I only hope the pen shook in his senile hand. He cannot have been unaware of these murders. I will tell him so to his face, when and where he pleases. And I will bring him this further testimony: One of the canons of his cathedral whom he knows well, a famous preacher, a doctor of divinity, had always seemed to approve the military authorities without any restriction. This prejudice troubled one of his lady parishioners, though she never dared mention the matter. But when she heard of the facts referred to above, she felt the time had come to speak out.

The creature listened without showing the slightest surprise.

'But surely you *can't* agree with——'

'I neither agree nor disagree,' came the sinister answer. 'Your Grace has unfortunately no idea of the difficulties of our ministry, in this island. At the last general meeting of parish priests, over which his Lordship presided, we had proof that last year only fourteen per cent of Majorcans made their Easter. So grave a situation justifies exceptional measures.'

✂ ✂ The 'measures' were indeed 'exceptional'! A few weeks before Easter the religious authorities agreed with the military authorities to take a census of the faithful. Printed forms were distributed for every man woman or child above the age of confirmation to fill in. They were inscribed as follows:

*Mr., Mrs., or Miss.....*  
*Living at.... Street..... No..... Floor.....*  
*made his (or her) Easter communion at the Church*  
*of.....*

On the back of the form were the following words:

*You are requested to make your communion in your own parish. Whoever does so at another church must bring a legitimate excuse to the priest of his parish.*

An easily detachable perforated counterfoil contained the following instructions:

*This form is to be filled in and sent to the priest of your parish. Alternatively it may be placed in the box reserved for the purpose.*

Needless to add there were soon queues at all the confessionals. Indeed such was the influx of inexperienced penitents, that the priest of Tereno found it necessary to distribute a further pamphlet, which contained this rather surprising but most opportune advice: *The chief difficulty in the act of confession is not so much the confessing of one's sins as knowing what to say (en no saber que confesar o como expresarse)!* There followed a much condensed 'examination of conscience' formula, and finally this post-scriptum:

*N.B. No olvides colocar tu billete del cumplimiento en el cajon del cancel para poder formar el censo.*

*(Do not forget to place the certificate in the box, so that the census list can be completed.)*

Not one priest in Majorca would dare deny that such a proceeding in the very midst of terrorism was bound to induce large numbers of sacrilegious confessions.

What more need be said? God knows the names of the steadfast—a very few—who doubtless believed themselves to be His enemies, yet unknowingly retained sufficient Christian blood in their veins to resent this injury to conscience, and cry NO! in the face of such insolent summonses.

May they find their way to Jesus Christ! May they judge where they were judged, when the time comes!

✎ ✎ Thus to wreak vengeance in the name of the Most High, is obviously flattering to races over-rich in Jewish or Moorish blood. But though it may exalt a small number of fanatics, I fancy it is of rather more humble assistance to the vast majority of Spaniards: for some it is a sly excuse, sparing them all remorse, enabling them to shift all next-world responsibility on to the broad shoulders of their confessors. For others it is a mere formula to be swallowed whole, as they accept the Fascist vocabulary, or the engines of war delivered on credit by Italian factories.  
*Hombre!*

✎ ✎ It would be quite wrong to imagine, for

instance, that the army-men were any more ferocious than the shop-keepers, whose tools, after all, they have now become. Though I admit I was rather surprised at first at the ease with which any Majorcan captain—when he was pensioned off and already so worn out that he was hardly ever seen at cafés except with his ‘good lady’ or his daughter—was able to apply every afternoon, against poor devils who resembled him like brothers, a law that was a ‘law’ in name only.

Among others, there was the incident of the ex-mayor of Palma, an elderly doctor-lawyer. His wife was renowned for her piety, and a number of Mother Superiors spontaneously testified in his favour. The only thing that could be held against him was his subscription to the Liberal Party. Yet he was condemned to death and shot on a morning of last spring, strapped to a chair, borne from his bed in hospital to the site of his execution, after nurses had worked all night—his last night—to keep his exhausted heart going, with injections. I could not understand why he had been made to await his inevitable death for six months, and I was given this explanation: ‘It isn’t our fault. We had to keep him alive until the confiscation formalities were over.’ For the poor fellow was rich.

✎ ✎ Once again let it be said: I am not a ‘counsel for the prosecution’. And I am not expecting to be believed. Majorca is only twenty-four hours from Marseilles. There is no need to pile up evidence, because sceptical people will soon be able to go and fetch it, red hot, for themselves. The tiny island of

Majorca is a closed vessel where blood will take time to dry.

If on these matters I were to question the army-men, they would reply that orders were orders, and that they were carrying them out publicly, as indeed whoever wished could see for themselves, by procuring a sequence of any Palma newspaper, where these facts were recorded.

If I said that to pronounce judgement is not the same as to carry out orders, they would merely laugh at me.

'What's it to do with you?' they might very well say. 'We've pals of our own preferment in Barcelona and Valencia who are doing just the same as us (though they deal with another type of person). When we leave the military school we're shoved into the Artillery, or the Calvary, or the Infantry according to our enrolment number. Well—this time it's the "bench". Rather a queer place for us, but so long as we're only among ourselves, there isn't much harm done. A thousand red civilians at Valencia, a thousand white civilians at Seville. It clears the air, as we say at draughts. Anyway, why should you be bothering about our consciences? We don't ask ourselves superfluous questions about Right and Wrong. If there was such a place as Hell—if there was just one chance of it, are *we* running any risk? Our priests can answer for us. Whether they're right or wrong isn't our concern. We don't care, so long as we're not held responsible. If they've made a mess of things, it's their look-out. After all, God may allow us to sit in judgement on their Reverences, in the next world. You may be sure we'll be just as hard on them! Each for himself, in the meantime! . . .'



## IV

✎ ✎ The Spanish tragedy is a charnel-house. All the mistakes by which Europe is bringing about her death, mistakes which she tries to spew forth in frightful convulsions, mingle there in putrefaction. It's impossible to touch it without risk of septicæmia. Faces rise one by one to the surface of the seething pus—faces familiar once, but now unrecognizable, alas!—and as soon as you try to fix your eyes on them they are blotted out and melt like wax. Honestly, I consider it useless to salvage any of these corpses: if you're going to disinfect a sewer like that—and it's a symbol of what the world will be to-morrow—you must start by doing something about the causes of fermentation.

I grieve to give the name of charnel-house or sewer to an ancient land that is not merely charged, but loaded, with history—where living men are struggling and suffering and dying. Those same weaklings who make a fine show of indignation would have been able to convict me of blasphemy in 1915, for I had, along with so many of my comrades, passed judgement on the war, the famous Righteous War, the War against War.

The carnage that is making ready now is of no other kind, but since it involves a larger number—or rather, since it involves essential spiritual values in their

entirety, the chaos resulting from it will be the more revolting, and its rotting refuse-heaps of dead, yet more foul.

✎ ✎ There is still mankind. But what do men matter if their sacrifice is futile? There are intentions, too. What is the use of them if the bad intentions cancel out the good ones, and the good, split between the two enemy camps, fight among themselves and end by devouring each other? The fatherland is a sacred ideal. But when you've sown the seeds of trench flu and typhus long enough in the name of your country, what will be left of your country? Or the love of it? You fools!

The Spanish war is a charnel-house. It's the charnel-house of real principles and false, of good intentions and bad. When they have stewed together in mud and blood, you'll see what they will turn into, you'll see what kind of broth you have brewed. There is no more pitiful sight than the spectacle of those wretched men crouching for months around a witches' cauldron, each of them jabbing with his fork and bragging of his titbit—republicans, democrats, fascists or anti-fascists, churchmen or anti-clericals—unhappy human beings all of them, all of them poor devils. 'Happy days', indeed!

✎ ✎ When I was young, the prelates and the *Académie* Liberals had an invariable answer to our objections: 'Democracy is sinking fast.' But it is now that Democracy is *sinking*, and we are *sinking* with it.

Perhaps there is no good 'cause' in the world left, to which, in the spacious phraseology of our predecessors, I can hope to 'pay my dues'. But for want of a better, I am not going to be made to stand for a cynical and flippant exploitation of the principles and the princes I no longer know how to honour. Christianity has been the making of Europe. Christianity is dead. And therefore Europe must die too. What could be simpler than that?

Social democracy has exploited the ideal of justice, and has kept none of its promises, except that of compulsory military service and of the nation in arms. Parliamentary democracy has exploited the ideal of 'fair-play'. Imperialist democracy is throwing away the ideal of greatness to-day with both hands. Militarist democracy puts seven-year-olds in uniform and prostitutes both heroism and honour. Authoritarian democracies will shortly drag down with them even the memory of what a free Christian Monarchy was like. And of course Ecclesiastics will get out of it the best way they can. Their predecessors of the fifteenth century were no less duped than they by the realist politicians of the Renaissance, and I say, and say again, and say with all my might, that it was then they put Christianity up for sale, and paid with the blood of Christians for their painters and sculptors and jewellers, for their pimps and their harlots. The unbearable fact about their successors is that they are honest and give away everything for nothing. It's true that there's nothing much to sell—our betrayals and our disasters are so absurd that they're almost funny.

Oh yes, if you like, Mussolini outdoes Alexander or

Caesar. But because of a certain respect for his personality and gifts, I refuse to associate myself with those whom he, like his master Sorel<sup>29</sup>, secretly despises—those whom Prudhon<sup>30</sup>, his other master, aptly called 'the Effeminate'. This 'great man', in the interests of his new Empire, can easily take what suits him from a tradition of whose significance he understands nothing, since its significance is spiritual. I never doubted that Charles Maurras was a better theological expert than I am. It's possible, too, that Mussolini is his equal in this respect. But they are wrong to talk about Christianity. Christlikeness has its essential home in Christ. Neither Maurras nor Mussolini are Christians. Obviously I have no business to praise or blame the men in the Church who think they can whittle away the totalitarian State, as they boasted formerly of paring down the democratic Republic. The call to arms of the time before last didn't take us in, and the next time will not do so either. Besides, I know beforehand the fate of these expedient alliances when Chancelleries are in power.

You may say what you like about Press lies, but, reading the papers stimulates peoples' critical faculty just the same, God help them! On the other hand, what is the use of pampering the political Realists? Do you expect niceties of a sentimental kind from them? They are as proud of their ingratitude as if it were a virtue. The dummy actors on the Right had already looked upon the farce of the Ethiopian Empire as a personal triumph: they made no bones after that about the farce of the Spanish Crusade. And now the West has found another protector:

I mean Japan, Japanese Christianity, chivalrous Japan, who has won golden spurs in China. Soon we shall be able to reckon on one Christian totalitarian more—Stalin. We shall have, with Hitler, Mussolini and the Mikado, five totalitarian Deliverers, not forgetting the Portuguese autocrat whose name eludes me.

✎ ✎ I am not at all opposed to force, nor to forcible methods. It would be too absurd, considering I went off to the last war of my own free will, not at the end of a stick. After fighting for four years, why should I be squeamish about a few thousand dead more or less? Why should I be so scrupulous? It isn't the first time the Holy See has given priests permission to play about with machine-guns, and I should be very indiscreet to criticize it, even though the narrow paths of the Dragon Caves,<sup>31</sup> if I am to be quite frank with you, sometimes made me wonder! Anyhow, nobody asked my opinion about it, and perhaps it might have come too late, since Father Janvier finds himself in agreement with Paul Claudel in setting up General Franco's Crusade as an example to our country's little boys. After lending our priests to the secular war of Justice and Right, one couldn't very well refuse them to the other kind? I dare say we shall have the opportunity very soon of talking this over between ourselves—as Frenchmen, I mean.

I consider the Spanish Crusade a farce, for it sets one against the other two heterogeneous partisan bodies who were already futilely opposed over the electoral system, who will always be opposed to no purpose

because they do not know what they want, because they exploit force instead of knowing how to use it to their advantage. Behind General Franco you find the same people again who have shown themselves equally incapable either of serving a Monarchy they ended by betraying, or of organizing a Republic they had largely helped to make, the very same people—that is, the same conflicting interests, allied for a minute or two by gold and foreign bayonets. Do you call that a national revolution?

☞ ☞ You'll tell me, of course, that the Reds are not worth much, and that all slogans are good. I beg your pardon! You can say that the Mikado is a good Catholic, that Italy has always been the soldier of the Ideal—*gesta Dei*—or even that General Queipo de Llano is cast in the mould of Bayard<sup>22</sup> or Godefroy de Bouillon—that's as you like. But don't talk about Crusades.

Maybe the time is coming when the last free men will really be compelled to defend by force what is left of the City of Christ, because it is a thousand times better to perish than to live in the world you are in process of constructing. We know all too well the crudity of your methods of propaganda. It's already become impossible to bring up the Great War, without making even dyspeptics laugh! We'd rather you didn't foul the Crusade idea as badly! What the devil do the political Realists mean by borrowing our vocabulary? Is it because their own isn't big enough? And with due respect, what are the Spanish bishops doing in it? When the Fascist Crusaders, assured of

solid naval and air bases on the Levantine coasts, set French Africa on fire in the hope of getting something out of the pillage that invariably follows on disasters, will Their Excellencies range themselves on the side of Mussolini as Patron Bishops of Islam?

"Let us argue reasonably," my distinguished opponents will no doubt reply to me. "Our Lordships would willingly have arbitrated for everybody's good in the Spanish conflict. Unfortunately the undertaking was made difficult for us because circumstances brought us too soon and too abruptly from the Monarchy to the Republic, from Democracy to Dictatorship. In short, we lacked the necessary come-back for talking the language of peacemakers with any chance of success. Discretion constrains us to rally to the side of the stronger, and since that side is only hypothetically stronger so far, we must not be niggardly with our support.

"Caution will come later on. After all, General Franco protects us and avenges our dead. It is perfectly true that we see, as you do, behind these standards and this pomp and circumstance, our former majorities—in serried ranks, alas!—who have cost us bitter disappointment. How will all these people manage to come to an understanding when they have laid down their arms? Time will show. But it is precisely then that we shall be able, ever so carefully, to take up again a rôle which we must admit obviously suits best our calling. By acting otherwise, and in the sadly unfavourable assumption of a restoration of the Monarchy, we should risk finding ourselves isolated, for the new king would have to negotiate with General Franco, not with these electoral forces we once con-

trolled, which are temporarily disorganized by the crisis. So much the worse for Sr. Gil Roblès! Once men's minds are calm again, we shall ask nothing better than to investigate carefully the probability of success for this excellent young man and for his reconstituted Ceda. If M. Georges Bernanos were not, in his character of Royalist and Frenchman, one of these fanatics whom it is impossible to register in Real Country—any earthly Jerusalem whose keys the Jesuit Fathers keep—he would admit that, compromise for compromise, General Franco is the one of them all to compromise us least, because he will not compromise us for long. Our doctrinal ruling on respect for established power, the strictures we formerly launched against the use of force, the deference we showed to universal suffrage—all these things will take on their significance again sooner or later. If you do not think so, it is because you are ignorant of the most characteristic trait of modern man, his contempt for moral proof, his immense capacity for forgetting. Moreover, whether limited republic or monarchy, the next régime must bring about a lull, and they would not know how to do without us then if they are to succeed, for we can reckon on adherents of both the Right Wing and the Left, we adjust the beam of the balance, we can weight the scales as we please.

“Thoughtless laymen who spoil the best enterprises by unforeseen reactions of vanity, deplore our seeming surrender of principles. Compromises, we assure you, are by no means what you think them. By the time they have demobilized all ranks, dissolved the Alliances, and sent home the Italians, the Germans



and the Moroccans, the generals will begin to shake in their topboots, for Spain will count up her dead. After a civil war, the true making of peace is always begun in the graveyards—you must begin by bringing peace to the graveyards. This is our care. Graveyards cannot be given a blessing by campaigners. Then you will see the generals asking of us, with humility, their share of forgetfulness. At the moment the word Crusade is in fashion, and Signor Mussolini likes to hear it. Who cares about words like these for long, once they have ceased to be of use? And who cares any longer for Crusaders?

“Our predecessors in the past took millions of men away from our ancient smiling land and hurled them into the flaming gorge of Asia. In all the days of the year, is one of them—is there one hour of the year—devoted to their memory? The matter is obviously out of date. It also has the drawback of bringing into prominence mythical personages who are too illustrious not to be above ingratitude.

“If M. Bernanos were not blinded by prejudice, he would conclude with us that our support of General Franco comes so late that this military gentleman is only able to derive a trivial advantage from it. Further, it is not meant for him nor for his men: we trust that this inoffensive mark of goodwill may soften the unsociable heart of the enigmatic Herr Hitler, about whom we sometimes ask ourselves with dismay whether he is not at bottom a man of feeling, and perhaps, alas! sincere! You never know with these Germans of the Wagnerian type whether they are lying or not. Whereas with statesmen of Latin blood you know where you are. Their word is entirely

worthless, and the two parties find themselves in unanimous agreement only when they negotiate for cash down. In brief, General Franco is the possessor to-day of an asset that is difficult to liquidate. It is true that malicious minds blame our caution or jeer at it

“What! we found ourselves back in the time of the Crusades, and you were not aware of it! You have taken twelve months to realize it!

“Would these people have liked us to draw up our letter on the eve of the *coup d'état*? We would say in answer to these hare-brained persons that the Italian airmen themselves only appeared in Spain a week or two later. This argument clinches the matter, does it not?”

✂ ✂ It really does clinch it. I write this without a smile. I have not the least intention of convicting the Spanish bishops of deception, because I amuse myself making them speak a language which I find satisfactory, which seems to me to express with sufficient verisimilitude their dallyings and their qualms.

But all the same I shouldn't like to be taken for a fool. In politics, episcopal approval has its face-value, it never involves its creators individually. The Church makes use of all, and is at the call of none. So be it. The principle is not lacking in greatness, but you will agree that its value depends on the value of the men by whom action is inspired—it will be great with great men, mediocre with the second-rate. It is certain that if (for my misfortune in this world, and my grave peril in the next) I were the leader of a

mere political party, I could not speak so plainly to General Franco without being asked: "How many bayonets can you make use of?"

If I were to protest that my support would remain a purely moral one, they would laugh in my face. I must add that I could not take back my word without shaming myself. But nobody will contradict me if I assert that in the case, however improbable, of a victory for the Government forces, the Episcopacy of Spain can be assured that in negotiating with Azana<sup>88</sup> they would surprise no one. This baleful privilege must sit heavy on certain shoulders. I know that it would on mine. To rise above human honour! What heights of solitude! To remain faithful to your allies only in success, to abandon them only in disaster—is there a more arduous, a more superhuman kind of duty? It is no use saying that I attach far too much importance to an act from which its authors expected no more than the breaking of a silence that was every day more difficult to keep. "You blame the bishops for speaking, you would have blamed them for keeping silent. Besides, it is a fact that the political favours of the Church are illusory, and they won't have disappointed anybody this time, unless one were to take the line that the Reds were in the right to make their claim to favours, which would be, between ourselves, paradoxical enough."

Heavens, there are Reds and Reds! Suppose the people of Valencia had won at the end of ten months? The rôle of hostage and intermediary with the government of to-morrow, sustained to-day by General Franco, would have then been sustained by the Basque Catholics. Something like this:

“You great little people! Amid the crisis, you have remained loyal to the pledge you gave to the Legitimate rule (legitimate in spite of its mistakes, for Christians do not admit rebellion). You have kept the flag of The Faith flying steadily, imposing on its powerful allies, together with reverence for its tradition and its language, complete freedom of worship and the protection of its priests. Fall in behind us, Catholic Huesca! Before the civil war, you were, of all the provinces of Spain, the most endowed with the social sense, the most Christian. The Jesuit Fathers had lavished tokens of their ardour upon you, and invested vast funds. It is your part to-day to bring to an end the misunderstanding which has alienated from Us, for a time, the working classes of the Left. You have just proved that men can be loyal at the same time both to the Church and to Democracy. We know your hearts, Catholic people of Huesca, and the Republic has received from you the evidence of your faith. It is yours to assert once more that if we deplore excesses, too often to be explained, if not, alas! justified by the selfishness of wealthy evildoers, we do not, on the other hand, share at all in the prejudices of the retrograde parties, who have always made the Church pay dear for their attentions and their alms. Those who wish to associate the destiny of the Episcopacy of Spain with that of a military rebellion which has been now suppressed, forget that in the past we wholeheartedly sacrificed the Catholic Monarchy to Democracy. Heaven knows our priests have perished at this time by the hundred, but martyrs belong to the Church, and to Her alone. They have paid for the guilt of all, and if all may be partakers in the fruits

of their sacrifice, what man, which party would be bold enough to take the honour of it upon himself? Basque Catholics, tell your erring brothers, beside whom you have fought, that if Our Fatherhood embraces the whole congregation of the faithful, our heart yearns first towards the working classes, and most of all towards the artisans. Did we not protest formerly against the suppression of the Asturias? Yet the statesman responsible for this suppression was one of our own, Señor Gil Roblès. How could anyone ever have believed it possible for us to give our approval and our blessing to an armed menace which, providing an example for the other side, identified in the same scourging the leader with the led, the cvildoers and the misguided, the blameworthy and those under suspicion? Most certainly the rebel army included a number of sound thinkers, but was it not commanded by generals who were freemasons? It requires the sheer malice of certain Catholic writers to dare to suggest that if General Franco had violated the frontiers of free Huesca, we should have bestowed a collective blessing on the Christians of Navarra, the Moors, and Dr. Rosenberg's pagan Hitlerites. There is no doubt that such calumnies are difficult to refute, since the defeat of the rebel general does not allow us to prove, by deeds, our attachment to your people and our admiration. But we are ready to associate ourselves solemnly with the lawful rejoicings with which all the Basques, gathered together again in the holy city of Guernica—which has been miraculously preserved from bombs—and led by the priests who have heroically shared their ordeals, will celebrate their deliverance by shouts, a thousand times repeated

of 'Long live Huesca! . . . Long live Christian Democracy! . . . Long live the University of Santander!' . . ."

✻ ✻ Once again, I don't find that ludicrous. I am trying to understand. Obviously, for the Spanish bishops as for myself, I imagine that human events have a superhuman meaning, but it is permitted to saints and to inspired spirits alone to interpret the chaos of them. For want of better things it is justifiable to follow one's road among these wild animals, like a wary man crossing a meadow in which bulls are placidly chewing the cud in the sunshine, deep in their unfathomable schemes. After all, when one is faced with a critical situation, one can always pretend to be blind or imbecile. I shouldn't dream of wasting my time by picking holes in the attitude of the Italian prelates throughout the war for Ethiopia. Their personal views about respect for a treaty, and the rules of war, could not possibly interest me, either as a Christian or as a soldier. That's all there is to it.

Thanks to the mustard-gas sprinklers that are used in Australia for destroying rodents, Fascist aviation has been enabled to strip whole populations of hapless negroes of their skin, so that they lay rotting in heaps in front of their huts, huddled with their cattle. It makes no difference to me if the Italian prelates affirm that a war like this seems chivalrous to them. I believe that I know what is chivalrous and what is not, but if there were any doubt it would certainly never occur to me to choose an Italian prelate as arbitrator. Up to now, at any rate, the Episcopacy

of this country has not represented the conquest of that famous Empire in the light of a Holy War, the struggle of Good against Evil.

It's all the same in the end. For I must tell you what is at the bottom of my mind. I do believe in a Holy War. I believe it to be inevitable; I think that in a world steeped in lies the revolt of the free men who are left is inevitable. The phrase 'Holy War' only half pleases me; saints rarely make war, and as for the others—I mean those who flatter themselves that they're saints—God save me from sharing my last tight corner with companions such as those! I believe in the war of free men, the war of Men of Good Will.

'What are you talking about?' you'll ask me. 'Who are those fellows, anyway?'

I should be glad to call men free when they ask nothing better than to live and die at peace, but who blame your vast civilization for making a muddle of life and death, making laughing-stocks of them. If you don't understand, it doesn't matter. You really can't take such antagonists seriously either. They are scattered all over, God knows where and how, and at first sight they don't appear even to resemble each other, for they certainly don't belong to the same class, nor to the same Party, nor do they all make their Easter Communion.

Men of Good Will! Why not the Meek, the Peacemakers? Really, you know, I fear that is what they are. I fear—I fear for you—that they really may be the Meek, the Peacemakers to whom your cursed world means nothing. What else can you expect? The poor creatures were born in the air of the Beatitudes, and they don't breathe freely in yours. They

will do what they can to adapt themselves, because they are conscious of their loneliness and can't explain it properly, so they are always ready to think themselves in the wrong, to seek refuge—for want of a better—in the words you have stolen, the magic words: Justice, Honour, Fatherland. So do the *toros de corrida* enter the gloomy little cell which has mockingly taken the form of their dim, sweet-smelling stable, but will only open for them on to the bloody arena.

Those words you have stolen are the pass-words to war. And yet somehow when it comes to dying, I don't think we shall fall in your ranks. We shall die taking on our own selves again, our very own selves, not your ill-omened masks. We shall moulder peacefully in our skins (our own skins) under the ground (our own ground), the ground that your filthy chemists haven't had time to adulterate yet. Provided, that is, that the Public Health Service hasn't first soaked us in petrol and turned us into bone-black or tar macadam.



## V

✎ ✎ The Spanish bishops, of course, if they waste their time reading me, will take me for a trouble-maker. They believe, quite wrongly, in playing the part of an onlooker who watches a brawl from his window and gives, frankly and with benevolence and courtesy, his opinion of the antagonists to the policeman who has arrived late, as usual, and has seen nothing. As a rule, the policeman adds nothing of any importance to the temperate words of this imposing witness, contenting himself with taking the wrongdoers off to the station.

Unhappily there is no superintendent capable of deciding this time between the belligerents, and still less a Justice of the Peace. Thus episcopal intervention takes on an importance of which it had not dreamed. Europe, I say again, is filled with war. Their lordships, whether in Spain or elsewhere, never lose the opportunity of deploring the fact. So they know the situation as well as you and I do. Europe is full of wars, but the biggest fool is beginning to realize that these wars are the pretext and the alibi of *one* war. It will be *The War*, War absolute, neither political nor social nor religious in the strict sense of the word; it will be the War that does not dare to speak its name, perhaps because it has none, because it is simply the natural condition of a human society

whose extraordinary complexity bears no relation at all to the primitive emotions governing it, emotions that are the expression of the lowest forms of communal life—vanity, greed, envy.

Fortunately these white barbarians still live in the old home. Even there, under pretext of improving it, but really because of their mutual suspicion, they have so barred their windows and armour-plated their doors, that they are now quite puzzled as to how to set about smashing each other up.

Nobody believes any longer in nationalism, at least nobody is ignorant of the fact that it is nothing but the decay of the love of one's country. It is none the less true that rival communities do not know how to get rid of these embarrassing corpses, nor how to stride over them without collapsing on top of them, before they have time to come to grips with each other and knock each other's heads off. I have written it before. I will write it again: the war that is coming will be nothing but a crisis of generalized anarchy. Since it is simply a question of depopulating a continent that possesses too many arms, too many hands to perfect its machinery, nothing compels people any longer to employ methods as costly as artillery.

When a small number of spies, provisioned by the laboratories as they go, and leading a comfortable tourist-existence from town to town, will be enough to reduce the population by fifty per cent, by spreading bubonic plague, making cancer general and poisoning the well-springs, will you call that war, too, you hypocrites? Will you decorate your brokers of trench flu and cholera with the Cross of Saint-Louis or the Legion of Honour? There won't be any way even to

celebrate the Armistice, since there will no more be an Armistice than there was a declaration of war. The governments will protest their will to peace, hand on heart, and swear by their most high gods that they have nothing whatever to do with this strange outbreak of epidemics.

Perhaps I am interpreting your inmost thoughts into images whose brutal nature angers you, and against which you can put up a defence. Even so, I do not believe that our Holy Father the Pope can be any easier in his mind than I am about the future of the Christian Occident. There is nothing at all extreme in coming to the conclusion that no reason could justify the mammoth charnel-houses of to-morrow, not a single one of the *casus belli* that were formerly so dear to our Leaders.

And yet these charnel-houses must go on filling up. You there, shrugging your shoulders, you know—oh, yes, *you* know that they will go on filling up, that you will see them filled, unless, my dear sir, you happen to be inside! It is only natural to employ, for such insensate ends, the religious fanaticism that survives faith, the religious frenzy co-existing with the most mysterious, the most empoisoned depths of the human soul. Who will make use of it—what monsters? Alas! it may be that there are no monsters. Those who dream of exploiting these perversions, as they would employ some slogan or other, are poor wretches who are not capable of gauging their terrible, their demoniac power. They don't believe in the devil, you see. They would let men burn for the sake of a gamble on the Bourse, without stopping to think for a moment about how to put out the fire; they know abso-

lutely nothing of Man—they define him, between themselves, as a machine for making money or losing it, a slot-machine.

What about the others, you say? The others are desperate, desperate without knowing it, in that kind of ignominious misery which is always ridiculous, and is called bewilderment—the despair that is proper to the Stupid. Alas! one mustn't look into things too closely. I am not so very old, and yet I have known the time when the Stupid thought they were living in a solid world, closely walled, the Modern World, superior to all those that had gone before, although of necessity inferior to the one that would come after it. I have known the time when the word 'modern' connoted 'better'. But the disillusioned bitterness of the great intellects of the last century—an emotion as foreign to the average Frenchman, at the time of the Exhibition of 1900, as the economics of Karl Marx or the aesthetics of Ruskin—supplies the great popular Press to-day, even though translated into grotesque terms, with its favourite topics. You will tell me that it doesn't matter, that these people have to make use of a certain number of commonplaces which they say over and over to each other like parrots, with the mincings and smirking, the gobblings and blinkings peculiar to that bird. But parrots aren't fed with wine that is flavoured with the aromatics of the Book of Job or Ecclesiastes!

That is what many a nitwit should remember when he is so brimming over with platitudes that he gets himself quite out of drawing—quoting La Fontaine to meet every case, as if that perfect poet had ever ventured further into life than into love!

The wisdom of the Venerable Sage is an old man's wisdom, it has the savour of it. I do not despise such maxims, for they will save you from making a fool of yourself nine times out of ten. But a man's life counts in it a very few decisive crises which give it significance, and at such times the smiling good sense of the Old Man only goes towards making you lose the moment's imperious call to danger or to glory—or even merely to Fortune. In youth or in prosperity (which is another youth) we willingly give ear to the sweetly reassuring discourse of those sceptics who claim to have experienced everything. And then age comes, and we ask ourselves what they really did experience? Imagine, for instance, that the delightful Jacques Bainville<sup>24</sup> had lived as long as Methuselah. Would he, during nine hundred years, have done anything but bestow his wit on the Stupid? That demon of subtlety was an illusion-monger before all else, like Baudelaire's glazier<sup>25</sup>. He lavished on second-rate people, with a wry smile whose bitterness was his revenge and his secret, the only illusion that Nature usually denies them, the illusion that they have understood.

Elderly rakes use much the same technique. In his time, La Fontaine—for elderly rakes love to brag about themselves—must have made many a stripling gape with admiration and envy. Yet many a one must soon have realized that the Old Man's strategy was eminently suited to the pretty animal-loves that figure in his Tales. When face to face with a real woman, of the kind who is given or never given, the poor disciple of Horace, always a bit 'the worse for wear', like his master, dreamed, no doubt, that there

could be nothing more thrilling than to let a fragile hand go straying under the skirts of his divinity, at the risk of receiving at the same moment her own hand on his face!

Thus do we see the buffets of truth reddening the cheek of these professors of Realism, as soon as they warm up a bit.

✎ ✎ It is a great delusion to think that the average man is only capable of temperate emotions. Frequently he appears average only because he submissively adapts himself to average opinion, just as the cold-blooded animal adapts himself to the temperature of his surroundings. Merely to read the newspapers proves that average opinion is the luxury of history's periods of prosperity, and that it gives way to-day in all directions before the tragedy that is a daily event. The light of genius is needed if we are to have a tolerant judgment on the events of the moment. It is with average happenings that the average man 'makes honey'—that sweet quintessence to which André Tardieu one day wanted to attribute intoxicating properties. It is obvious that if you make the average man sit on a red-hot log, you'll dry up his secretions at the same time. With his behind on fire, he'll run for shelter to any one of the ideologies he would have formerly shunned with alarm. The disappearance of the middle classes is fully explained by the slow and progressive destruction of average men. The middle class isn't enlisting any more recruits. Dictatorships exploit this phenomenon, they are not its creators.

✎ ✎ It seems to me useless to count on average men for a policy of toleration. Average men have sick nerves, and it would be highly dangerous to inflame them. . . .

I say again to Their Excellencies that Their Lordships do not appear to have realized fully the responsibility they are assuming. "The Spanish Civil War has lasted for two years," they think. "It does not involve us in anything if we extol it to-day."

I beg your pardon! The Crusade-Ideal is abroad—the Crusade of the Forces of the Lord against the Forces of Evil. I shall not be lacking in the respect I owe to the Episcopacy if I assert that such an enterprise is an important one, and that since their lordships approve it, they should take on the command. It is not that I consider myself personally concerned: I am a royalist, and when it comes to fighting, I shall follow neither their orders nor their leaders. But all the same they can't leave the Crusade-Ideal at the first turn of the road, and take no trouble at all to see who gets hold of it. 'Forward, March!—for Good against Evil!' And here's Japan already replying in a voice as sweet as a clarinet, 'Present!' The glowing generosity of the new champion is flaming in the four quarters of Shanghai. Doesn't it occur to your lordships that you are being made fools of?

You are naturally at liberty to answer that I am speaking for myself, which counts for nothing. But what if I were speaking in the name of hundreds of thousands of men who are ready to fight? Would you really think me ingenuous enough to hurl my soldiers into battle on an order as vague as: Wipe out the Wicked! To begin with, who are the wicked?

"Those whom the men on the side of Righteousness will point out to you as such."

But I distrust the men you call 'Righteous'. Why shouldn't your lordships point out the reprobates yourselves? For it is quite understood that we are crusading against God's enemies, the enemies God Himself has intended to be laid low by us.

"The enemies of the Community ordained by God are the enemies of God."

Quite! But in all fairness we must allow that the Community has two kinds of enemies, those who exploit it from within with egoism and injustice, and those who, from without, have vowed to destroy it. If the Angel of the Lord were to cross the frontier to-day to smite with his flaming sword, in either camp, these two types of anarchists, would you not see the entire military strength reduced to nothing, your Excellencies? Wouldn't it be simpler, therefore, to reckon as enemies all the schismatics and heretics and agnostics who are unable to recite the Nicene Creed without a mistake?

"Nothing of the sort, misguided man! There are heretics and agnostics, alas! almost everywhere. There are even unbelievers too. Question us no further. We are not carnal men, it is the intention that has our blessing or our curse—such intentions, that is, as find expression. God will judge the rest."

Very true! You say you curse the intention, but it isn't the intention that gets shot! If you only wish to concern yourselves with intentions, why do you get involved in a battle of Men? Men have plenty of excuses for racking their brains. You'll be getting in our way, your Excellencies—don't show yourselves on



the firing-ground! The moment you see a likely opportunity, you'll become men of peace again and leave us between two fires, as Louis XVI did with the Swiss long ago. We shall hear no more talk of you till the day when a worthy fellow of a priest, rather pale and stuttering, in a certain chill little dawn, will come and give us ghostly counsel to the noise of hammers that are knocking nails in something behind a wall. That is why my question is not at all of the kind you might suppose. Civil war is wished for by a few, but to start with, it is the release of a psychological complex: 'Let's finish things once for all!' The enemy is not, in this case, a man to be converted, but suppressed, since the social order finally admits being unable to keep him within its bounds. He is outside the law, the law protects him no longer. He has nothing to expect further, but pity. But in civil war any act of pity would be a shocking example to the troops! You don't mean to tell me that General Franco's soldiers would have tolerated seeing Spaniards run through by lousy Moors—Spaniards who were asking for mercy in their own language—if they hadn't believed, on the word of honour of their leaders, that these fellow-countrymen of theirs were outside the pale? There is no pity in civil war, there is no longer any justice.

The Reds in Palma belonged, for the most part, only to the moderate parties of the Left, and had no share in the assassinations in Madrid or Barcelona; they were shot down like dogs just the same. You don't set out for civil war with lawyers, judges and Criminal Codes in the ammunition-lorries! I've no liking for this kind of enterprise, but there's a chance

that they'll thrust me into it one day. It seems to me that then I shall try to look my job in the face before I roll my sleeves up. I blame your men in command for behaving about injustice precisely as they behave about a brothel: slinking along by the walls, and itching to preach morality once they have had what they want—morality in fatherly fashion to the poor child with only a pair of stockings on, who listens and yawns, sitting on the edge of her bed. Isn't the law as to suspected persons, for instance, printed in unmistakable type in any and every charter of civil war? What is the use of pretending not to see it? 'Halt, or I fire!' You will admit that the most eminent lawyer won't be able to talk round such a maxim as that. Does it matter if the man who didn't halt was wounded or dying? Not a single one of the sick or wounded who were taken prisoner during the military operations in August and September 1936, against the Catalonians in Majorca, was spared by the Nationals. Why should they have been, I ask you? They were beyond the law, and they found themselves beyond humanity too, among ferocious animals—*feras*—beasts!

Wasn't that enough for you? Are you going to make these wretched men your reprobates as well? Up to now, the Church has tolerated their suppression. Is it fitting henceforward to give this suppression the character of being a praiseworthy act, justified by motives that are above the ordinary? I know nothing about it: I should like someone to make it plain to me. It is difficult to deal with the soldiers of the Army of Evil as if they were any sort of belligerents. Wouldn't they, by reason of this fact, come under ecclesiastical

jurisdiction? Their sin is the very one that was punished with the utmost severity by the tribunals of the Holy Office, and history teaches us that these tribunals spared neither women nor children. What ought we to do about women and children? I ask myself why anyone should find ridiculous the question I put here. It is useless to hold the Church or the Catholic kings responsible for the Inquisition—moral principles brought it about. After all, when those faggots were lighted throughout Spain, the country included many more eminent theologians than it does to-day, and since the Gospel had already been preached there for fifteen hundred years, there is reason to believe that we have not learnt very much since. Customs evolve more slowly than morals, or rather morals don't evolve, they appear to be subject to abrupt and radical changes which distinguish the rise and fall in periods of history, as they do in the animal or vegetable kingdom. The world is ripe for every kind of cruelty, as it is for every kind of fanaticism or superstition. All that is necessary is that certain of its customs must be honoured, as, for instance, that one should abstain from violating its strange feeling about kindness to animals, one of the few advantages, perhaps, of Western sensibility to-day. I believe the Germans would very soon get used to burning their Jews in public, and the followers of Stalin their Trotskyists.

I have seen—I've seen with my own eyes, I tell you—a small Christian people, with peaceable traditions, extremely, almost absurdly friendly—I've seen them suddenly turned to stone, seen their faces hardening, even their children's faces. So it is no good to claim

that we can keep a hold on certain emotions once they are let loose. Shall we make use of them whatever they are like? Shall we run this risk? Shall we drown in blood, as did the contemporaries of Philip the Second, these great heresies hardly above the surface as yet, but to be heard even now rumbling underground? For months, in Majorca, killer-gangs, swiftly transported from village to village in lorries requisitioned for the purpose, shot down in cold blood for everybody to see, thousands of persons who were held to be suspect, but against whom the military tribunal itself could not produce the faintest legal allegation. The Bishop of Palma was informed of this fact, like everybody else. Nevertheless he showed himself to be on the side of the executioners whenever he could—though it was notorious that some of them had the blood of a hundred men on their hands. Will this be the Church's attitude to-morrow? In the future the question will hold much less importance for the Spaniards than for us. It really seems likely that the Generals of the *Pronunciamento*, in order to save their skins, will allow the Monarchy they destroyed six years earlier to be re-established. The adventure will merely have cost a million men. Certainly this appears an enormous expense, but it will be worth it to Spain to be disqualified for a long time from taking part in any sort of Crusade at all. She dwells behind her mountains, as in the past, on the fringe of Europe. And for her the purge is over.

I think of the purification of my country, not as yet begun. I think of the purge of France. If we are to get together a decisive number among the working classes, our time is very limited. If the conflict of the

Forces of Good against the Forces of Evil is as near at hand as they say it is, there is need to act swiftly and strongly. Could you not assume your responsibilities as we shall assume ours when the day comes? It will not be in the company of Paul Claudel or Father Janvier that you will reach the end of your Crusade, it will be in ours. That is why I have a perfect right to speak to you quietly, face to face, as I am doing. If any poor souls think I am being ironic, I am sorry for them. Russia is no longer alone in hoping for a revolution in France. The two other totalitarian States would get just as much out of it, and a revolt from the Left would naturally be preferred, because it would more seriously disturb the country's constitution, would shatter its framework, alienate us from the capitalist democracies, and give the dictators the chance of more profitable alliances. And so it is possible that we may be driven into being the first to open fire. That won't happen without risk of misunderstanding.

Whatever their effrontery, those who preach the Good War will not dare to maintain that the Forces of Evil will be so clearly defined that we can't miss them. Unfortunately the rabble is seldom to be found within range of machine-guns. You may be sure that our lot, too, will give its whole attention to the rear, to the brains of the rear—the traitors, the spies and the defeatists of the rear. In front of us there will be left only decent French workmen, foolish enough, for instance, to think I'm on the side of André Tardieu, and to be ready to shoot me for that, poor devils! Shall I be obliged to treat the men I respect as if they were wild beasts?

“Come now, you can treat them as you like.”

I beg your pardon. Civil wars, to their eternal shame, are basically manœuvred by police agents. They are inspired and controlled by the police. If I had presumed to put up any opposition to the summary executions in Spain, I should have been shot myself. You don't wage civil war in kid gloves. Terrorism is the order of the day, and you know it. The Spanish bishops know it so well that they have been obliged to refer to 'regrettable excesses' and 'inevitable abuses', in accents that have nothing soldierly about them. I am sorry to have to confess that these conventional forms of general absolution count for nothing with me. Their Excellencies' mistake is always the same. They seem to think that war is like Shrove Tuesday, that it's a jolly respite, as it were, from social morality, and that men can give themselves up to being cruel just as gay sparks at Carnival-time indulge in bottom-pinching! Once the illuminations go out, we must welcome the dear lad home with a smile that's both knowing and fatherly. 'Don't worry, my dear boy. We can none of us resist a little fun sometimes. Think no more about it.'

But, Your Excellencies, this is something more than a little fun!

“You will allow that in the heat of battle soldiers get savage, they are like the horse in the Bible who neigheth and paweth the ground. We know it from M. Claudel, who knows what war is, and has even written war-poems. After all, when you find yourself in front of a man who wanted to kill you a moment ago, it is very excusable, when he becomes your prisoner, if you do give him a little prick with your

bayonet—the gallant French poilus called a bayonet ‘Rosalie’, did they not?”

Oh, no, no! Your Excellencies are quite wrong. No fighter, except for certain war-mongering poets has ever even heard the name of ‘Rosalie’. I fancy ‘Rosalie’ must mean a bayonet that is rose-coloured with blood. This brutal and blackguardly joke isn’t at all a soldier’s joke, I assure you. With all due respect, it must be a translation into poetic language of the sour joys of certain ladies who either have no one to show them affection or are suffering from their middle age. Your Excellencies, many ladies find the soldier home on leave the best possible image for stimulating amorous propensities. You must not be deluded in the same way—quite innocently, of course. English old maids, too, convince themselves that the *aficionado* only frequents the Plaza in the hope of seeing the horses disembowelled there, but it is they—poor dear things!—who are all eyes for these horrors. It is possible, no doubt, that long ago a war was a fine training for gladiators and tamers of wild beasts. But when a man has once had to face the orange and black wall of a *barrage*, in the blaring of thousands of steel sirens, when he is trying to control his breathing, and his heavy boots are sticking in the clay, when he’s done his best to fall into line with what is left of his platoon—he hasn’t time to bother any more about such trifling matters. . . . I mean hatred of the enemy. . . . No, your Excellencies, wrong again! It isn’t that he’s been drinking—he’ll only drink himself blind later on. He is at the gates of death, or rather a little beyond, but he does not know it, he knows nothing of this detachment, so radical, so profound

that life has no colour any more, but has dimmed, as it were, to a sort of supernatural transparence. The shrieking forces that comfort him bear no relation at all to the rebellion or the anger of a poor fellow like himself; and though he fancies that at times he is taking great care not to leave his pants on the barbed wire, I swear to your Lordships that in the sight of God he is actually walking naked.

You will seldom receive confidences of this kind, for the reason that the Gates of Death are not to be found in any railway time-table. Those who in their ingenuousness chose for themselves the comic name of 'Old Soldiers' will go back with their families in vain to *the very spot* where they suffered their ordeal by fire: they will remember nothing at all, and instead, they will spin their yarns. Memories of war are very like memories of childhood.

✂ ✂ Your Lordships should realize that heroism would be very easily defined if there existed somewhere in the world men who had taken their degree in heroism, and were able to give the inquirers information on the subject. Heroes don't think that they are heroes, any more than saints believe themselves to be saints. While they are waiting for the Church's decision, which is sometimes slow in coming—and even much after that—saints, as you know, have to hand over the care of themselves and their glory to learned Canons, who re-fashion them, of course, in their own image, that they may look like Canons.

It is the same with war. Moreover one has far less opportunity for being heroic, even for a split second,



than you would think. You may quite well have taken prisoner a whole machine-gun unit, and yet have kept a rather uneasy impression of that feat of arms, when excessive praise of it has quickly turned it into something unpleasant. Whereas you would have no doubt whatever about a few secret moments, so unimposing that there's nothing to make a story about, but in which, out of the weariness, the disgust, the agony, rebellion even, of the exhausted flesh, there rose up suddenly the acceptance of death, neither meditated nor with gladness, but something more intimate and deeper—the tranquil reconciliation of life and death, like a miracle of light. . . .

Your Excellencies, I am not directing these words at your Lordships. I quite understand that you should have a very different idea of the soldiers of my country. I am writing this to free my soul, because I am sick of hearing the War disparaged and extolled by turns, by people who never understand anything about it. Those moments were ours, ours alone, so truly ours that memory is most often powerless to weave them anew into the stuff of life. What they were, they were only once, their link with other images—images as trivial as they and common to us all—is not really valid so that the mechanism of memory, if it has to find substitutes for them, works to no purpose. Your Lordships will question in vain my old comrades over there.

'That's so,' my comrades will perhaps admit. 'There were days when a chap was bloody well fed up! Nothin' funny about that, is there?' They would have answered like that twenty years earlier, climbing back with a song on their lips to their radiant villages,

that were filled with the crowing of cocks and the cheerful clattering of buckets at the well-head. I see them now, on those mornings that were all too few, in the sunny little market squares, with their caps still stiff with mud, and those damned leggings!

'How about a good old sozzle? You comin'?' They tried to smile, with their three weeks' beard and with cheeks so hollow that the smile was crooked—faces, O beloved faces, faces of my countrymen!

I know that it isn't nice to 'have a good old sozzle'. But what do you expect? They thought they were drowning yesterday's fear and the fear of to-morrow in the wine of illusion, a bitter brew. But it wasn't fear, it was the memory of grace bestowed, and they were in a hurry to become men like other men once more, to get back into their helpless skins of mobilized civilians, just as they used to leave off their Sunday coats, put on their corduroy trousers and wriggle their toes in their *espadrilles*.

"Grace bestowed? What grace?"

Well, I can't find another word for it—grace, a gift. It was nothing to do with it, really, that they were unable to assess the price. Many of them even felt it was a bad omen. 'Some days you didn't care if you lived or died,' they used to say. They were afraid, no doubt, that life, in fair exchange, would not keep its hold on them, would forget them. And they quietly determined to sozzle and sozzle and sozzle—as cheaply as possible. They really did get drunk, they became just poor devils again. That's what you call *the abuse of grace*, I believe? Fortunately they were ignorant alike of the nature of this fault, and of its gravity.

We will dispute some other time, whenever you like, as to whether it was a question of ignorance or of forgetfulness, for many of these men had been baptized. I only mean to say that at times they had possibly been deserving of this grace, of God's smile upon them. They lived, you see, without being aware of it, a life of brotherhood down there in their muddy holes. Not that they were blameless in their behaviour to each other, or that they called one another 'Brother' as monks do—a word of three letters that I daren't write here was usually adequate enough for their friendly spirit. But it isn't a trifle to take on your friend's guard-duty because he's worn out, at the very time when trench-mortar shells are swishing into the fading daylight! They used to do that, and many other things too. They shared their last crust, they drank their last mug of putrid coffee together, and with great clumsy hands and a 'Rotten bad luck!' or a 'Bloody awful!' they crammed their whole wad of dressing into a belly's gaping depths, with the perspiration off their foreheads dripping into it as well. And that isn't a trifling matter, either, when machine-gun bullets are zipping about your shoulders.

I beg to draw the attention of your Spanish Lordships yet again to this point. When you are living a life like this, it's difficult to hate your enemy. The daily offering of yourself doesn't make you liable to the usual states of mind—envy, hatred and all uncharitableness—which shut a man in on himself and make him his own limitation. You can quite easily get used to dead bodies, to the sight and smell of dead bodies, but charnel-houses remain charnel-houses. The 'tough guy' becomes a coward there, the coward

crumbles on the spot, his bones turn to water. As long as there are soldiers in the world, you will not prevent them from setting their risk at a high price. And when you set your risk at a high price, you respect your enemy, too. That is the principle of both sportmanship and war.

"But who is preventing you from respecting it?"

Let me illustrate my observation with an example. I am not aware of what the Crusaders of the Peninsula did or did not do. I only know that the Crusaders of Majorca put to death, in a single night, all the prisoners who were huddled in the Catalanian trenches. They took the whole herd down to the shore and shot them, one beast at a time—they were quite leisurely about it. Oh no, your Excellencies, I don't at all wish to bring your Venerable Brother, the Lord High Archbishop of Palma, into it! He arranged to be represented at the ceremony, as was his wont, by a certain number of his priests, who, under military inspection, offered their ministrations to these hapless human beings. You can picture the scene, can't you? 'Come on, father, isn't that one ready?'—'Just a moment, captain, I'm handing him over to you at once.' Their Excellencies may say that they have obtained satisfactory results in crises like these, but I'm afraid I'm not interested. With a little more time on their hands, and if they had taken the trouble, for instance, to make the patients sit over a cauldron of boiling water, these Churchmen would no doubt have had still greater success. They might even have made them intone vespers, why not? It's all one to me. . . . When the job was finished, the Crusaders piled their cattle in two heaps—those

who'd been given absolution and those who hadn't—then sprinkled petrol over them, which they call gasolene over there. It is quite likely that this Purification by Fire may then have taken on, by reason of the presence of the priests officiating, a liturgical significance. Unfortunately I only saw these blackened, shiny creatures two days after that, contorted by the flames, some of them counterfeiting obscene poses in death, which must have been very distressing for the ladies of Palma and for their eminent confessors.

A reeking tar oozed out of them, and smoked there in the August sunshine. . . .

✎ ✎ Their Spanish Excellencies are discovering, doubtless, that I propound my argument very slowly. Let them have patience! We are only debating about the past because of our justifiable anxiety about the future that is at hand. I shall not tire of repeating that we may undertake sooner or later the purging of the French, after the pattern of the Spanish purge, blessed by the Episcopate.

"Don't be uneasy," their Lordships whisper in my ear. "When things are once got going, we will shut our eyes."

But that's just what I don't want, your Excellencies—that you should shut your eyes! If you shut your eyes, I know the kind of man I am, I shall at once leave off shooting down the riff-raff. It isn't condonation I want if I'm to do this job properly, it's encouragement—the threat of hell itself, in case of my slackness, wouldn't be too harsh. I am a prey to so many temptations, alas! but all the same it never

occurs to me, even after a good dinner, to say to myself 'What a pity that my good father-confessor, in his wisdom, won't let me do a little purging!' It's an arduous task, a worrying job, this purging! If I have to think of taking it on one day, who on earth do your Lordships wish me to apply to?

"Our Lordships do not comprehend these extravagances very clearly. You are only fit to be a private in the Crusade, or possibly a corporal, since we are informed that you attained this slight promotion during the last war. It would be strange if we had to urge you on to kill. Is not that your duty as a soldier? Evil has only too great a prestige already, and we should incur the risk of shocking the faint-hearted by a quixotery that does not harmonize at all with the sanctity of our ministry. The thought of doing honour to the Church's enemies never occurred to us. It concerns us, on the other hand, immediately to bring low their pride and their vainglory, to humiliate them. The smart of a certain amount of injustice facilitates their expiation in this world, and will spare them greater torment in the next. What have they to lose? The stake, after all, did them the same service in the past. The sin would lie in doing this for them out of hatred. So it must suffice that we hope for their salvation, and that our theologians assert this salvation to be possible, since God died for us all, and this article of faith must be upheld. The tolerance of scholars would give food for thought only to the little band of faithful who read their books. The majority of our congregations prefer to believe quite simply, once and for all, that lechery alone was the cause of Luther's condemnation. It is less profitable

to refute the false prophets than to keep our sheep out of the way. We never dreamed of maintaining that the thousands of Spaniards who were shot down by our Crusaders were murderers of priests or nuns. Is it not better to rank innocent men unjustly as assassins, than to risk letting assassins pass for innocent men? No miscarriage of justice here below is beyond remedy, since all verdicts can be revised in the next world."

But, your Excellencies, perhaps it really would be a mistake beyond remedy to shoot the innocent?

"That is why, since we are powerless—we Churchmen, princes of Peace, servants of the servants of a God who was the servant of all—powerless to assume control of a secular repression that is necessarily brutal, we prefer to leave our children, the soldiers, undisturbed in faith. What is the use of troubling their consciences when their leaders give such wise orders which they must obey on pain of death? If your theories were accepted, the Crusade would have led finally to the legalized execution, for insubordination, of the most conscientious among our flock—those whom the compassion of Christ would have stirred to action a few months or a few weeks too soon. Where is the harm if we leave them at the behest of justice a little longer? Having thus escaped court-martial (and court-martials are not very lenient to conscientious objectors) they will regain their capacity for pity at the time when we shall have need of them. They will greatly facilitate our task when the democrat Jesuit Fathers judge the moment ripe to establish relations with the working classes. This experimental policy may appear to be lacking in dignity: we agree

that it is scarcely dignified. We are pledged to pursue it, come what may, ambling along till the end of time, because we believe that the world is past praying for, though we are careful not to say so openly.

"If the world were not past cure, we should have known it in these two thousand years. The pagan world was tough, but it contained an element of frightened submission to the forces of Nature, to her laws, to Destiny. Christian hope has released the latent sap. To bring down old walls, all you need, do you not, is a handful of wild flowers striking their roots into each of the crevices—and dampness in the soil? And now Hope, deflected from her spiritual purpose, is hurling man towards the conquest of Happiness, inflating our human race with a kind of collective pride that will make its heart harder than the steel of its machinery. We are not only the preachers of the Gospel, we are also its officers. As its spiritual hold grows weaker, we become more and more like those ambassadors who are so open to attack that they never dare ask for their passports back, for fear they should be taken at their word. The Catholic writers hold all the cards against us! Alas! We neither make nor unmake kingdoms any longer. We enter by the door that is kindly left open for us, but we enter with all our former state, and if our hosts are not looking too closely, we do them the honours of their own table. Do the Catholic writers know the Gospel better than we do? They are making a mockery of our Crusade. They demand that we should put at the head of it a leader who is beyond criticism. Let them find him, and when they have found him, let them put him there themselves! So far



we will be content with the leader who is usually at our service, without our having to give him a name. Would you like to know the name? It is General Lesser-Evil. We shall continue to prefer him to General Making-Things-Better, for the wisdom of nations has denounced the latter long ago as the enemy of Prosperity.

“What else can be done? Human society is full of contradictions that will never be put right. For instance, Revolution is always started by the poor, though the poor seldom gain much advantage from it. The counter-revolution will always be waged against them, because they are people with grievances, and sometimes even desperate. Now despair is infectious. Society assimilates its poor contentedly enough, so long as it can dispose of those with grievances either in hospitals or prisons. When the proportion of the aggrieved becomes dangerously increased, it summons its police-officials and throws open its cemeteries. You will retort that to-day society exists no longer—that what we call by its name is really only a kind of compromise, the established order, a condition of things. A condition of things only has permanence with the support of a certain optimism. For want of a better way, we strengthen optimism by diminishing the number of the trouble-makers. These are bitter truths: we admit it, and it is wiser for us to leave them in the shadow. Moreover, they are not our responsibility. Build a Christian community for us, and our policy would be very different! The Church is a community too, in so far as it is with human societies that she has to deal. Would you like us always to be on the side of the trouble-makers? Our credit in

this world would very soon be exhausted at that rate!

“Not that we shall ever cease to honour Poverty, or to teach that it should be held in high esteem and reverence. But there is not only poverty—there are the Poor. The only authentic Poor for whom we can stand surely are the voluntary Poor—our monks and our nuns. They wear the uniform of the regular army. The others belong to irregular divisions, rather similar to the privateers who carry a safe-conduct but whom the powers-that-be always reserve the right to disown. It is perfectly true that the modern world, by multiplying necessities, multiplies the needy, and makes the peaceable practising of Poverty more and more difficult. The Popes, by their Encyclicals, have roused the attention of governments to the consideration of their major problem. What more can we do? The number of the indigent is growing, and in the same ratio we see the war-budgets increasing too. This is a disturbing coincidence. After all, whether we wipe out the superfluous poor by cannon-balls, or destroy entire harvests of wheat by fire, or throw tons of milk into the river, they are all identical ways of meeting the situation. If materialist society requested that we should give, for instance, our solemn sanction to the extermination of the unemployed, we should certainly refuse it. But you will observe that this measure would have less barbarous consequences than our helpless refusal, for in allowing the indigent—that is, the anti-social elements we cannot absorb—to multiply, we pave the way inevitably to bloody repressions which always overshoot the mark, fill the cemeteries, empty the Treasury,

and are invariably the cause of economic crises, and the begetters of new poor. And so the vicious circle goes round.

"Still, the extermination of the unemployed has automatically our disapproval. But we should be at a loss to know how to forbid society from defending itself against the elements in these disturbances. This last consideration will also seem not very dignified to M. Bernanos. We will point out to him, therefore, that as society grows more ruthless, so will our deeds of charity become more precious, more indispensable. Some among the needy are Christians, others are unbelievers. If they shoot the latter, we shall not rejoice at it, but at least we are not distressed on behalf of our Churches and our priests because of it. What do you think we can say to the people who assert that they will assume our defence against murderers and incendiaries? We make a show of believing them. Occasionally we do believe them, for these ill-starred times are rich in paradox, in ambiguities and contradictions. It is worth it to gain a few more years, a few more months, even! For the hour is coming, the hour is at hand, when we shall be, as they say, 'in a fix'. Materialist society still has a regard for us. It was realist in its origins. Realism is an honourable name, reminding us of the controversies of the good old days, the dispute about universals. Do not discourage this cordiality, therefore. It is plain that when the indigent are wiped out, society will demand the right to decimate, on the ground of the same realist principles, the incurables, the infirm, the sterile or those who are presumed so—in the interests of the race. We shall have to set our faces, of course, against

these regrettable proceedings. We shall take the least possible risk in opposing it, supported by a section of the universal opinion. These classes of unfortunates should not really be identified with the other elements of disorder. Thus we associated ourselves with the defence of the Jews against Herr Hitler. The Jews have been very careful not to take up arms. Herr Hitler cannot hold them up to us as rebels! And so they have become dearer to us than the Basque Catholics, for the heroic obstinacy of these last seriously compromises our policy. Further, the Jews are a power in the world, and worth sparing. We say it without shame. Such a position would be blameworthy if we expected these Jews to serve our wordly interests. But we are taking care of them so that they may take care of us in their turn—that is, take care of the Church, and perhaps one day even give away some portion of their abundance to the needy who have escaped massacre. For everything comes from the poor, and shall return thither. Poverty is a gulf, which swallows all, and patiently consumes the riches of the world. We know that. We know that the patience of the poor will not fail. PATIENTIA PAUPERUM NON PERIBIT IN AETERNUM. The patience of the poor shall prevail over everything. It is thus that we must understand the mystery of their presence here. We agree that it should not be so—that is why Our Lord Jesus Christ cursed the world—and yet we must make terms with the world, though the habit cannot be formed without a certain hardening of heart. If the Church were ruled by the Little Sisters of The Poor, its wordly affairs would not fare much better. You may take it from us that they

would fare much worse. What are we to do? We impose an obligation to be just on the masters, and a duty of resignation on the slaves. When a slave takes to shooting, how can we look upon him as resigned? Whereas the injustice of the masters is a matter for assessment. We should not think of denying, alas!, that the master's injustice costs society much more than certain violent actions. But even if the damage were the same, the penalty will be very different, since Justice refers the injustice of the master to its law-courts, while the rebellion of the others is the province of the civil guard. And unfortunately there is no appeal from the verdict of a machine-gun.

"We shall not quibble about agreeing that there are bad employers to-day. There were worse in the past. To make the best of it to our opponents, we will even be willing to refer back to the last century, when legislation for the workers did not exist. We will take any one of the provincial little Jacks-in-office, whose greed, lack of feeling and avarice killed off generations of women and children, who were broken down by labour that was too much for their feeble strength, and whose contemptible wage was scarcely enough to keep them from dying of hunger. If you would have the picture blacker yet, we would not deny that in defiance of the sixth commandment this rich and evil man made use of his prettiest workgirls for his culpable designs. That has been seen before. That has very often been seen before. Let us now suppose that on a certain pay-day, the workpeople, being guilty of drunkenness (the worst of the sins of gluttony, and also the only one within reach of people who are starving), have collected with the intention

of smashing their employer's windows by throwing stones at them. The Superintendent of Police (we will not speak of the Mayor, for we assume that in the time of Louis-Phillipe our industrial magnate would certainly himself have filled the office of Chief Magistrate)—the Superintendent, would have un-faillingly intervened, and brought his constables. In a similar crisis, made sadly notorious by a certain little book, the rioters, together with their families, refused to obey the summons to disperse, and the officer in charge gave the order to fire on the crowd. There were a deplorable number of victims.

"The point is, that almost without exception, high-minded deputies unanimously approved the action of this official. However justifiable the workers' outraged feelings might be, they could not of course find expression in rioting. Any Superintendent would have taken the same course, if he were a good Catholic and a member of the Society of Saint-Vincent de Paul."

I entirely share your Lordships' opinion. The argument could be pushed further. It would be easy to imagine, for instance, that the manufacturer-mayor was entertaining at dinner that very day the curé of the parish. Doubtless while they were waiting for the arrival of the constables—always a little behind time—this clerical gentleman would give his host authority to shoot down the rabble who were threatening his property.

"Your irony in no wise disconcerts us! The exercise of the right of lawful defence should certainly be withheld from none."

I agree. How far would you have allowed it to

the poor devils of whom we have just been speaking?

"Precisely as far. For if the rich evildoer, followed by his servants, had gone to lay siege to their humble but decent cottages, had broken their windows. . . ."

Oh, your Excellencies, there were very seldom windows in the cottages of those days! And if you will allow me to say so, your hypothesis is improbable in other ways as well. But we'll let sleeping dogs lie. Do you, or do you not agree that, according to the testimony of the Reverend Fathers of the Society of Jesus, there existed in Spain a number of estates where the carelessness and greed of the landowners reduced their wretched people, who had been undernourished for centuries, to famine? The dictator Primo de Rivera called these strange centres of depopulation 'the disgrace of Spain'.

"Our Lordships deplore it. We have risen to our feet many times, and are still doing it, to speak against. . . ."

Pray let your Lordships be seated. Your physical exercises won't serve any useful purpose. Would you or would you not have approved the revolt of these unfortunates? Would you have invoked in their favour—and I mean openly, solemnly invoked—the right of lawful defence?

"Their revolt would have been to very little more purpose than our physical exercises."

You are right—and I am going to tell you exactly why: it is because the call for help from the rapacious landowners would at once have been answered by men on the side of law and order in a body, among whom would have been found decent fellows, many

decent fellows, nearly as lean as, and not less exploited than, the hungry rioters themselves. There is a solidarity about men in authority. I do not deprecate it. I deprecate the fact that it is founded on an inhuman ambiguity, on a horrible conception of the way to keep order: it's just keeping street order. We have known that way of keeping order since our childhood. It's called 'The Assistant-Master's Way'. Two practical jokers stick a pen into schoolboy Gribouille's behind. Gribouille yelps. 'Gribouille, two hundred lines!'—'Oh but sir. . . .'—'Gribouille, two hundred lines: and if you keep on disturbing your companions in their work, you will have to leave the room. . . .'

"We and our Venerable Brothers have written many times. . . ."

Your Excellencies, your Lordships have defined perfectly the tenets of the Christian Way of Keeping Order. Merely to read you, we understand quite clearly why poor men become Communists; it's their way of expressing their disapproval of spurious order. Your disapproval is evidently of a more serious, more objective kind. Perhaps it is that disorder only offends your capacity for enthusiasm, or your common sense. The down-and-outs would be incapable of defining it; they experience it in their bones. A doctor may regret very genuinely that a faulty system of hygiene sacrifices innocent young people to syphilis. But it's one thing to deplore the existence of syphilis, and quite another to suffer from it.

"Are you intending to convict our Lordships of fraud?"

Most certainly not. I only mean to say that you



will not be suffering in your flesh, and still less in the children of your flesh. Besides, if you were, your religious sentiments should make the exercise of saintly patience come more easily to you.

"We are, in very truth, men of peace."

Of course you are. But it happens that the consequences of disorder affect you in your turn. Your attitude isn't so very different then from that of the doers of violence who kill lest they be killed. We see you, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, giving your blessing over and over again to the conclusions that come forth, all shining and slick, from the famous Hotchkiss factories. I saw, for instance, His Lordship the Archbishop of Palma fluttering his august hands over Italian machine-guns. Was this so or not?

"It was so. Should we have let ourselves be slain, depriving Catholic Spain of her Shepherds? Were our assassins' lives more precious than our own? Should we have spared them at the cost of our own existence?"

I will reply once and for all to your Lordships that, for a man of honour, slaying is a grievous necessity. It will always seem to me more desirable to do it for myself. But your Lordships resign yourselves to exercising merely indirectly and through an intermediary your right of lawful defence. This right seems to me to be reserved more and more for a particular class of citizens, and to be held to be inseparable from the rights of property, so that a man may fairly defend his house by shooting (even if he has several houses), but may not defend his wage by the same methods, even if he possess nothing else. It would have been of greater value, after so many orations on

the wretched condition of the peasantry and the Spanish workers, the selfishness of wealth, and the alleged anti-social nature of the Bourbon monarchy, if you had restrained yourselves somewhat from denouncing solemnly before the world—as being solely responsible for so vast a diversity of misfortunes—the men of whom at least one can say that they suffered more than other men from the mistakes and the misfortunes which *you* spend your time in lamenting.

So long as you assign to wealthy evildoers no more serious penance than your Lenten sermons, it must be a sad sight to behold your old hands, your venerable old hands on which the pastoral ring is gleaming, shakily pointing out to the executioners the breasts of the evildoers who are poor. However bad they are, the poor cannot be held responsible for the economic crisis and the armament-race. What if they have lost God? Did you give them God to take care of? I thought up to now that this responsibility was entrusted to you! We have a pretty fair idea, I think, those of us who are human fathers, of the respect due to your fatherhood. When your children turn out badly, why in heaven's name should you refuse to share the anguish of those who are fathers according to the flesh? This kind of anguish has a name—shame is what we call it. Haven't the sins of the children always recoiled on the fathers? It is a grievous risk, but it ratifies, too, the dignity of our humble earthly function. If children had no power to dishonour their fathers, how could they honour them? When I say this, I am sure that I shall cause your Lordships no surprise, for your preachers never lose an opportunity of reminding us of our responsibilities as to this

major point. Moreover, it is this very responsibility that makes us fathers: without it, we should be no more than guardians or foster-fathers.

☞ ☞ I have no doubt that in the privacy of their oratories the Spanish bishops take their consciences severely to task. They would console our own enormously if they would let us see something of this praiseworthy anxiety in their sermons. We should ask nothing better for our part than to share, as their sons, in the bitterness of it. When all is said, if God withdraws Himself from the world, He withdraws from us, from Christians, first of all. I am no expert in theology—I am speaking here as I always do, according to the letter of the Simple Catechism, the only one I am certain of knowing. From earliest times, Spain has been a Christian country. To safeguard her from the Moors, the Jews, and the greatest heresy of the West, her Churchmen have not been sparing of her flesh and blood. In the Catholic kings they found associates so zealous that the Popes themselves were sometimes obliged to calm the ever-suspicious bigotry of these madmen in high places: their ambassadors, as we learn from certain of their reports which have been published for some time, used to act as spies on behalf of Monsignor the Archbishop of Toledo at the Court of France, and the *sbirri* of the Holy Inquisition would gather in the suspects as they were crossing the frontier.

In short, it would be impossible to instance a country in Europe in which the Church has found more allies, or when she needed them, more accomplices. In the

middle of the nineteenth century, when our poor clergy, ruined by the Revolution, were already being recruited with so much difficulty, their Spanish Lordships literally did not know what to do with their priests and their monks. You will grant me, similarly, that they have never lacked resources, nor, save for brief eclipses, have they lacked Government favour. Is it not incredible, then, that a nation like this should include to-day so many fanatical un-believers! My own country's example could certainly teach me nothing. It took two centuries of the rationalism of the Renaissance before our ruling classes were infected, and our people got their anti-clericalism from the Voltairian *bourgeoisie*. Anti-clericalism, like pox, began as a middle-class affliction. In 1789 the French peasantry remained loyal to its priests—they remained so again in 1875.

✎ ✎ No, your Spanish Lordships cannot, as our own can, lay the blame on the secular classes.

"In that case, it may be the devil."

Quite a possible thesis. Nevertheless, referring always to the penny catechism, I suggest that it would be perilous to admit that a country of such vast spiritual reserves should suddenly be ravaged by the hate of God, as though by plague. I know Providence sometimes amuses herself by baffling all our logic, but she rarely allows the Question without an Answer to be asked by Men of Good Will—the question which expresses despair in its most insidious, most formidable shape: 'What's the use?'

The church has powerful, supernatural defences

against the devil. I know God can cause them to be useless for a while. But after all, you people of the church, you are always telling us of the necessity of your temporal policy. To hear you, one would think we in no way appreciated its importance and happy effect in the world. There is no sacrifice of money, conviction and pride which you do not demand from us in the interest of your infallible devices. In the old days of diplomatists, when you had pulled off an advantageous agreement, did you not insist on your share of praise, and, when you did not receive it spontaneously—no reproach intended, your Excellencies—did you not take it yourselves, thanks to the religious Press so expert in hyperboles? If—as the Reverend Jesuit Brothers had cherished the hope—their Lordships had succeeded in constructing on the other side of the Pyrenees, a republic of church-goers, a clerical democracy, born of a lucky compromise between the Conservative spirit and Left vocabulary—God, the praise that would have been theirs, the floods of incense!

But since your temporal policy is of such noble purpose, why should we not be allowed to estimate your failures? I am no braggart of sincerity. I'd as soon leave in the hands of anybody else what remains for me to say. What have I to gain from this enterprise? I cannot side with the 'dangerous men', who are freely excused from going too far in their statements, because they are feared. Their Lordships of Spain, or elsewhere, have nothing to fear from me. Alas, it can happen to anyone among us, even though he were a prince or a bishop, suddenly to find himself face to face with the saintly humanity of Christ, for Christ

is not above our miserable geometry or physics—He is within, He has so clothed himself with our unhappiness that we are not sure of recognizing Him at once.

But after all, their Lordships are as 'safe as a house', with me. They know full well that under no pretext could I wish to attack the Church. I know that my remarks will not be agreeable to everybody, but who can sincerely open his mouth without risking a scandal? The sheer putting of thought into words is, in this world, a continuous scandal. And what of the written word? It may be of value to-day, and by to-morrow be evil. Certain works that were of great assistance and release, at the time when the poor heart that conceived them was still throbbing, now appear galvanized in dangerous immobility—faces inhumanly contorted, like bogies.

Ah, the final privilege of the poor was not to be able to read! Now they have been deprived of that too. They are no longer alphabetic, they are merely ignorant. The world lives on illusion, that is to say, on prestige, and it is a great pity for many of us that the prestige of people, or even of uniforms, has been replaced by the still more inferior prestige of words.

I know this, I know all of this just as well as any of their Lordships, who may accuse me of undermining *their* prestige. But then, have they not always taught me to live with my times? Silence can no longer suffice to uphold prestige in a world delivered over to words. It is not my business to argue the principle, but I have the right to criticize its methods, since I belong to the public who is presumably to be convinced. Surely I can prefer methods of sincerity? No doubt the desire for sincerity does not so impose

itself on public figures, even though they be men of the Church. I am prepared to admit that they should lie for want of a better way out. Yet lying will always be a last resort—and at least should be of some use. Experience of life soon teaches us that the most ineffectual lies are those that attempt to cover up sins or mistakes after they have been committed, the ‘darns that are worse than the hole’.

Fathers of families, for instance, have their own temporal policy too, and it is, in more ways than one, a policy of prestige. Well, we rarely improve matters by propping up with lies our errors and failures. We never escape ridicule by affectations of gravity. I know a lady, a very great lady, one of the greatest ladies of the world, who in the presence of her good cousin the King of Spain, in the course of an informal luncheon, let fall her denture. Discreetly she picked it up, for one second hid her mouth behind her napkin, whilst glancing round the table, observing furtive smiles, finally catching sight of the clerical tutor at the far end, pale with compassionate emotion.

‘Father,’ she said, ‘I wish it were in my power to make you an archbishop. We are the only two who didn’t laugh!’

✎ ✎ It may be said that I am not a good judge of the temporal policy of ecclesiastics, for I know nothing of its secret works. Nevertheless I can judge—like anybody else—of its outward manifestations. Their Lordships know better than I what they want in the way of prestige. It is not a matter of wanting, but of obtaining.

Personal pride informs us of our degree of prestige according to the generally favourable opinion we have of ourselves, therefore it cannot guard us against ridicule. The outside person is alone in a position to forewarn.

I will therefore brave such ridicule by taking the liberty to denounce omissions and lies which from now onwards are quite useless, since they only convince a slender herd of respectful fanatics, who would be just as satisfied with the truth, since anything satisfies them. For each of those parishioners who work things out as though the Church always played the trump card, and only lost sometimes because of the magic charm of some imp hidden in her robes, there are at least a hundred thousand decent folk of average intelligence to whom the legendary spiritual acumen of ecclesiastics is always being vaunted. But they know perfectly well that the Church does not generally pick her dignitaries amongst contemplatives strikingly favoured in the mystical sense, and they realize that in all human enterprise, or at least in all those wherein the human mind is taken into account, the heads are considered responsible for failure.

Let us once again make it clear that it would be false to consider me a zealot or sectarian. And it might be dangerous to lump together all the Spanish bishops and persons responsible, on the grounds of incompetence. Still, let us suppose for one instant that the Holy See had put me in charge of Catholic Action<sup>36</sup> for the last ten years, with the budget of that powerful company at my disposal; I would not be at all surprised if by now I had been sacked. Is religious propaganda the only enterprise which is not



to be gauged by results shown? If there is no such control, why then, I suggest we place the names of possible heads in a hat, and elect one at random after offering up a prayer to the good God. Such a procedure is not one to be despised any more than many others in use—far from that—only I fear competent authorities would not consider it. What then?

Ecclesiastics, I know, think on very different lines. Conservatives, for that matter, are just as optimistic. If the *Action Française* had three million subscribers to-morrow, M. Pujo would surely congratulate himself on his good fortune. But if, on the other hand, the number drops to a couple of hundred, the editor will declare that history is made by minorities, that such abortive results are further proof of the furious animosity of enemies within the gates, and of the necessity to back up as never before the only newspaper that has never been wrong.

In the same way, when the Jesuit influence gains ground, the good Fathers extol their methods. It is called a 'triumph'. When they are ousted by every government, or even forbidden by the Pope, as in the eighteenth century, it is called a 'test', and they insist that the sheer vindictiveness of adversaries shows how their Company is of the greatest.

Well—let them have it their own way. Let us say that if Spain is now swarming with breakers of crucifixes, it is because the devil likes to be particularly devilish in a country blessed with too many virtuous priests, edifying church-goers, and zealots of both sexes. In the same way monasteries that were suddenly to harbour a profusion of drunken or lecherous monks, would be regarded as fortresses of respectability in the

grip of demons. A very interesting supernatural view-point.

But I hardly think the Index would allow me to develop such a theme in a novel. . . .

✎ ✎ My opinion only matters to a few friends. Which is why I express it so freely. Though I have not inherited the virtues of my modest ancestry, I seem to have retained a certain sense of Christian life, which at one time not a single baptized member of our ancient people lacked. I realize that it is possible to imagine—like Auguste Comte<sup>37</sup>—a country based on practical considerations only, with about as much respect for spiritual forces as the author of *Positive Politics*. For my part, I should not be able to breathe among such people; I should die, for want of my own air. . . . A hundred times would I prefer iconoclastic brigands whose sacrilegious fury is indeed far nearer to my own heart than the pride of philosophers. There may be many Christians of my kind left, among all classes of my country. We cannot tell if inquiries and statistics would confirm the spontaneous reactions of instinct. At all events the evidence of the most expert chemist could hardly weigh against that of a poor devil who proves, by choking, the inferiority of the atmosphere.

Spanish air is not good for the lungs of Christians. And the agony of suffocation is the more intolerable because at first there is nothing to account for it, for the entire country is under Catholic sway. When the illustrious Archbishop of Malines, Cardinal Mercier, returned from Spain, he was congratulated on

the good fortune of being able to view so Christian a country at such close quarters. He replied after a long silence—to the very witness who was later to tell me of it—‘A Christian country? Do you think so?’

After such endorsement, I think I may suggest that before searching for reasons that might not penetrate the average mind, for what is now a plain fact of history, it would be preferable to ask one simple question:

‘Has not Christian teaching, or rather Christian education, been sacrificed in Spain to the profit of a handful of fraudulent exploiters of the religious instinct?’

If that were the true state of affairs, it would seem absurd solemnly to have condemned all the opponents of the *Pronunciamento*, even the Catholics, and the thinly veiled approval of military methods applied to the conversion of infidels.

What does one endorsement more or less matter, you say? I will answer you, as carefully as I can. I do not suggest that the Spanish bishops were any more bloodthirsty than their revered French supporters. “This M. Bernanos,” they think, “fancies himself very clever, he judges us by what we write; does he take us for a lot of wretched scribblers? With all his telling phraseology, he’ll probably not save a single Basque Catholic from execution, whereas our more discreet insistence has several times obtained from General Franco the formal promise of a certain softening of his punitive methods.”

That is not a negligible argument. I might even add that their Lordships have doubtless far too modest an idea of the august esteem in which the Catholic

public holds them. Modesty which, alas, any number of former experiences seem to justify. But unluckily political realists either of the Right or Left, are becoming aware that Catholic opinion, which for the last two hundred years could win no victories, is becoming quite a considerable force, one might almost say for the moment an indispensable one for the organizers of further massacres.

The realism of Stalin, in France at least, is inclined to propitiate Catholic opinion. In the *Urbs*<sup>38</sup>, as refashioned by Mussolini, Fascist realism offers it a kind of retaining fee, something like the power of a Prince Consort. Even the realist Hitler is taking pledges on Catholic opinion which will no doubt be of use in the future, when it is a question of drawing up Concordats in the purest tradition of Marxian diplomacy. In a word, the world now in process of formation suffers from a pitiful lack of all spiritual values, and is eager to make use of ours. Like all bankrupt treasuries, it does not mind what interest it promises.

We simple laymen do not assert that we have at our disposal a huge reserve fund of spirituality, and up to a certain point, we have no objection to letting our pastors make use of what we have. But surely it is perfectly legitimate to require certain guarantees before we let the dictators speculate with the humble savings of our ancestors! These savings are not merely an abstract 'good'. Our spiritual inheritance is something which lives in flesh and blood—it is not a *library* for which we shall have to render account to God. Our children are a part of this inheritance, the living part of it. The charge of the Spanish bishops, though obviously it is nothing more than

one after many others, is not a mere charge like the rest. It is not possible to conceal from their Lordships the fact that the thirst of our generation for greatness, for heroism, has not precisely been quenched by their activities.

Each time that they intervened, in the name of what they described as the lesser evil, it was to ask us to sacrifice something more. They have never preached anything except resignation, acceptance of the *status quo*, obedience to established power.

Loyalty to the France of our ancestors was still even yesterday stigmatized as regrettable insubordination, and hideous little radical priests, yellow with all the spite natural to the intellectual parvenu, sniggered when we used the word 'honour': that old-fashioned word had become reactionary.

When war broke out, these people who had enriched the catechism with an eighth deadly sin, the sin of 'defeatism', as good as handed over the care of our wretched little laymen's consciences, our conscripted consciences, into the hands of M. Poincaré and M. Clemenceau. A few years later, when it became necessary to formulate some practical ruling about Peace, the ruling which the world expected of them, expected both of us and of France—these same bishops officiously handed over this task to M. Aristide Briand. Halcyon days when Father de la Brière held the job in the League of Nations of observer for the Society of Jesus. O heroic times, times that have ceased to be! The voice of that reverend gentleman must have grown silent with the fall of Addis Ababa. His apostolic ardour must have been quenched when the last bomb on Guernica petered out!

Or else, having said his little piece, he is now waiting for his superiors to give him another to learn by heart.

I'm afraid my ideas of obedience may not be as orthodox as they should be. 'A Jesuit should be as obedient as a corpse'—no doubt, but no one can compel a corpse to speak!

✻ ✻ If to-day I awaken these memories, it is in order to make it clear how this new language of their Lordships echoed like a trumpet-call in the hearts of our children. Is it not said in Holy Writ that because the fathers have eaten sour grapes, the children's teeth shall be set on edge? We drank of humiliation as of water, so our successors naturally want something to warm up their insides. It is also to be expected that they should easily be gulled into drinking inferior wine.

Listen, for I am still careful to weigh my words. When the men of the Church went in for a policy of concession, and preached accordingly, they ran no great risk. But a call to arms—even a whispered call—is liable to arouse a multitude of which they know little, and whose language so far they have rarely spoken: I refer to the young, who after all created the Middle Ages and Christianity, in the blessed days when the world was not overburdened with old people, when a man of my age, thanks to the ignorance of doctors, the abuse of meats and lusty local wines, had soon to be thinking of making way. . . . Ever since the seventeenth century, the Church has been on her guard against the young. Oh—you may smile, but you are bound to admit

that your methods of education showed greater solicitude than trust. It's all very well to protect children against the perils of adolescence, but don't you think the well-behaved young folk displayed on your stands are a little lacking in spirit? Are they really more chaste than their thirteenth-century ancestors? I wonder! Between ourselves—I doubt it. And I wonder, too, if these select products of humanistic and moralistic influence, popularized by the Jesuits of the seventeenth century, have not absorbed your attention to the point of allowing you to lose touch with a different brand of youth, which for that matter rarely crosses the threshold of your temples.

Yes—call *that* youth to arms, and Christianity will come alive before your eyes, like quivering water about to boil. For old races of fighters it is easier to struggle, and die, than to practise the virtue of chastity. You made the mistake—not of asking too much—but of asking too little. You should have demanded all: life itself. At bottom your ingenious methods are not so much inspired by the New Testament as by moralists. The New Testament is so much younger than you! To hear you, one would sometimes think youth must be an unfortunate but inevitable distemper, an ordeal to get through. You appear to be watching out with your thermometers for any unfavourable turn, as though it were measles or scarlet fever. As soon as the temperature goes down, you heave a sigh of relief, as if your sick man were now out of danger, whilst in reality he has merely joined the ranks of mediocre people, who are kind enough to call each other 'serious-minded', 'practical', or 'reliable'.

And yet it is the fever of youth which keeps the rest

of the world warm. When youth grows cold, the world shivers.

I know it isn't always very easy. When a minister or a banker entrusts his child to you, he hopes you will model it in his own image, and you cannot let him down altogether. You do not always let him down. The subtle flower of encyclopaedic atheism<sup>89</sup> was nurtured in your back gardens.

"We treated them well," you say, "they had nothing to fear with us, we guarded them from evil."

Yes—a pity the boat ever put out to sea! Had it never left the harbour, we should see it still, all newly painted and freshly washed, bedecked with pretty flags!

"Well—but we warned them against the dangers of the world!"

No doubt. They knew more or less all the concessions which a Christian can make to worldly wisdom, without risking eternal damnation. With such champions of Christianity, the world has nothing much to fear, the world can comfortably await the fulfilment of the curse against it.

You cannot serve God and Mammon, you cannot serve God and Money. Don't worry, I shall not expound that saying, since you do not allow it. I merely wish to say that if you had for the last twenty centuries taken as much trouble to justify it, as you have spent in ingenuity, cunning and psychology, not exactly to divert its true meaning, which God would not have allowed, but in cautioning your parishioners against too literal an interpretation—Christianity might have been very much more alive.

It is of little importance that you should turn out



average young Christians, for the modern world has fallen to such baseness that an 'average Christian' no longer even means an honest man. It is useless to turn out average Christians, for they will become that anyhow, when middle-age overtakes them. I know that God alone can see into the individual heart, but still—taking one mediocrity with another, on a broad basis—any responsible head will tell you that an average Christian possesses all the customary faults of humankind, plus an extra dose of pride and hypocrisy, not to mention an unfortunate faculty of settling all conscientious scruples to his own advantage.

"It's the best we can do," you say.

Maybe. But I'm rather afraid that you may be deluding yourselves in much the same way as those professors who drew up the old-fashioned university syllabus. Though aiming at a little of everything, you haven't aimed at enough of anything. Your products have an unfortunate resemblance to those which the professional mind considered as characteristic of the French spirit: balanced, moderate, restrained. I realize that it would be dangerous to exploit the natural revolt of youth in face of a society organized quite apart from its interests, and which as yet refuses it admission. Your task is to educate citizens who shall render unto Caesar not only that which is Caesar's, but a little extra into the bargain. This little extra is of course a variable figure. It can be haggled over, used as the valuable basis for negotiations with the powers that be. But please don't think that this haggling shocks me very much. Since Caesar is the master of you and your institutions, since he opens and closes them down as he likes, why

shouldn't you haggle with him? The trouble is that later you may find it rather difficult to re-kindle the light which your prudence has hidden under a bushel.

✎ ✎ Forgive me for stirring up these ashes. They are already so cold that it would be death to lie down upon them. Our generation was not exactly over-gorged with splendour! The scope of our temporal loyalty was ever shrinking, till it became but one little spot on the map, like the States of the Church—that famous heritage of Charlemagne for which our grandfathers imagined they laid down their lives.

We mistrusted everything. We mistrusted ourselves, most of all. Moralists are so eager to consider the young presumptuous. Yet the presumption and innocence of youth are but very similar expressions of a profound timidity, for youth fears ridicule more than death, and the ripe old men who pull the strings realize this perfectly well.

I am speaking of what I know. What I express is my experience. Were it not 'public property'—if one may be allowed to refer in such terms to a matter of so little importance—I would not think of recalling that my son served with the *Phalange*. Yet I feel I can talk of him now with special freedom, because he is, whilst I am writing this, somewhere out at sea, off the coast of Dahomey, which shows, after all, that he does not belong to the sit-at-home variety.

He has never deserved, any more than I did, to be held up as an example to the young people of France, but still, he did fight. He fought for our little island, and later—yes, later in the trenches of Madrid. I still

regard the old *Phalange* as entirely honourable, and it would never occur to me to compare a magnificent leader such as Primo de Rivera to the crafty generals who have been paddling with their heavy boots for the last two years, in one of the most hideous massacres of history. Even had I thought otherwise, I would never have dreamt of condemning Yves's loyalty to his comrades and his flag. The honour of a lad of seventeen is a thing too fragile and dangerous for elder hands to tamper with.

Which is exactly why we would ask you to think, before approving or disapproving; for it is easier to turn—by means of some solemn charge—any old general into a kind of Godefroy de Bouillon, than to reconstitute out of a Godefroy de Bouillon *manqué* . . . any old general.

When our young people are on their feet, your advice will be too late, and we're not the sort—we, their fathers, are *not* the sort—to pull them back by their jackets. . . .

✂ ✂ For our sons we demand a different kind of leader from General Lesser-Evil. If modern society has reached the point of injustice when even men of peace turn to arms, we must at least have some kind of understanding. Are our sons to die merely to retard inevitable dissolution?

Anarchists, communists, socialists, radicals, parliamentarians, from Prieto<sup>40</sup> to Roblès—they are a pretty assortment, the Reds of Spain. But the Whites are not a whit better. Who would ever believe that the millionaire Juan March, enriched, as every Spaniard

knows, by fraud and embezzlement, thrown into prison by the Monarchy and now one of the great financiers of the Rebels—who would believe that he could have the same political and social aims as the head of the *Phalange*, who publicly promised to have him executed in 1936? And what the devil can the peasants of Fal Conde have in common with the semi-Jewish aristocrats, who inherit from their two-fold origin the most refined forms of leprosy and epilepsy, and whose egoism was the death-blow of Royalty?

The tragedy of Spain is a foretaste of the tragedy of the universe. It is the shattering proof of the unhappy condition of men of good will in modern society, which little by little eliminates them, as a by-product that can be turned to no good account. A man of good will has no longer any party. I am wondering if he will soon have any country. In time of war, or civil war, men of good will are very useful to moneyed men. They give their courage into the service of the latter. But when peace is made—or what the heads call peace—it is more than likely that the moneyed gentleman will have his *secretary* receive the man of good will. ‘Everything’s all right now, what more do you want?’ If the man of good will becomes persistent, he is considered unruly. So long as his violence can be used by the masters, he has the magistrates and policeforce on his side. But if, later on, it be displayed for the benefit of another category of citizens, he ceases to be a man of good will, and comes under martial law as a seditious influence. And I fear the Episcopate might not be of much use to him then. . . .

✂ ✂ This very day the papers have published a protest from the Holy See. It is difficult not to be moved at the thought of this old man, so near his end, gathering up all his strength in an appeal to God against unfair accusation, fighting to his last breath for the honour of his pontificate.

And yet—put yourself in the place of any young Italian crusader. All these crusades! He's been sent crusading against the Reds, crusading against the blacks—is he likely to be sent crusading against Herr Hitler's red-and-blacks? After all the Führer has been proclaimed enemy of the Church, in the same way as Señor Prieto. Of course, for this last purging he wouldn't have to be sent on such a long and expensive journey. If he's in Spain already, fighting the Holy War, he could always work off some of his zeal on the spot—on the Nazi volunteers in General Franco's army.

It's all very puzzling.

✂ ✂ Our action has always been religious, proclaims Pius XI. It is easy enough for the Pope to confine himself to religious action. But a propagandist behind his machine-gun will have his work cut out to distinguish in himself the missionary from the partisan. On the battlefield, they become one and the same thing. Such a confusion seems to me inevitable, and I shall not be so hypocritical as to cry scandal. Yet I must insist that this kind of apostolate cannot always be practised with an entirely clear conscience. The duty of religious authorities is surely to define the object clearly, since unluckily they con-

sider it impossible to make the leaders responsible. Crusades crusaded against each other over Our Lord's Tomb. M. Henri Massis now assures us that we are defending the 'essentials of Western Civilization'. A very vague formula, rather like 'the War to end War'. There is also much talk of 'indispensable freedom'. Have we really decided between ourselves what freedom we require?

For a Christian I know of only one: the freedom to practise his own faith. No human society—to judge by the secular wars of the Church and civil authorities—has ever allowed Catholics the absolute freedom of this most precious right.

For my part, I feel that in order to practise my faith, according to the spirit of the New Testament—forgive me—it is not only required that I should be allowed to do so, but also that I should not be coerced. *You cannot threaten people into loving God.* Churchmen have been apt to forget this. I want to make myself very clear: What about church policemen? Two thousand years ago the hardest words of the New Testament were spoken against the Pharisees—their hardness astonishes the heart, yet that race shows no signs of extinction. Is there one among us who can boast of not having in his veins a single drop of viper's blood? Since you have not been able to keep your parishes, nor even your convents or monasteries free of them, is it not greatly to be feared that they may frame the laws which rule your armies? Both for your sakes and theirs, this should never be. The freedom of Jesus Christ is intact within us, and our honour is as yet unscathed. I would like to tell you this more simply, in simple words.

Let us not leave the sword of Christianity in such hands. We must oppose them, though we do it in company with harlots and Samaritans, publicans, thieves and adulterers, as once our Master showed us how.

✎ ✎ I doubt if specialists have been greatly pre-occupied by this problem. Let the same priests who are for ever proving by futile little booklets their smug ignorance of the sorrow in men's hearts, in the heart of mankind—for they have succeeded in remarkably weakening the already very conventional notion inherited from the dull humanists of the eighteenth century—let them, I say, condemn these musings of mine!

They wouldn't do God the honour—they wouldn't even do their own priesthood the honour—to suppose that the sacrament of baptism, for instance, might cut so deep into a human being as to make his perversion, were he to become perverted, of an evil proportionate to the grace bestowed.

It would of course be rather tactless to let fall such home truths from the pulpit on parishioners in a hurry to get away, with their minds on the collection.

"What are you interfering for?" the good fathers once again will ask of me. "There's some truth in all you say. But if you spread that kind of thing about, you're just giving unbelievers an unfair advantage. Won't they conclude from your diatribes on the corruption of the best among us—*corruptio optimi*—that it is we who do the corrupting, and that they are the first victims of *our* infidelity?"

No doubt that theory can be maintained. But it doesn't say much to support the case of those unbelievers who make use of it, since it bears witness to a certain profundity at the very heart of supernatural truth, which is also one of the graces of God, and abused by such reasoners. But it is certainly valid for those who never conceived of so subtle an interpretation. I believe that they will hear it one day, I think so from the very depths of my soul.

One day, to their great surprise, they will hear it fall from the lips of the just judge, together with his compassionate sentence.

❧ ❧ Moral theology has this signal advantage over other sciences. The truths which it affirms are controlled more by conscience than reason. And moreover, reduced to their essence, I think they can be understood by anybody. They seldom justify us, they justify us less and less, the more deeply we understand them. Those which I am trying to express, I know, are not to my advantage, and I have always known it.

Who was the first person to teach me that faith is a gift of God? I cannot remember. I expect it was my mother. So it was a thing that might be taken away. From that time the fear of death was known to me, for even after so many years I am unable to separate the one fear from the other—the twofold dread slipped through the same gap into my child's consciousness. Therefore faith never appeared to me as an obligation. The notion of having to defend it against myself simply never occurred to me.



For faith is my own defence: faith is that part of freedom which I could never relinquish without relinquishing life itself. If we stood face to face one day, like two strangers, it would mean the same mysterious, incomprehensible division of personality which must precede the act of suicide, and alone can explain it. You do not kill yourself just because you 'want to'. My belief is that death only attracts a small number of foredoomed creatures in whom the reflex of terror seems to work the other way round, something like certain sexual aberrations.

I am no more drawn to suicide than to scepticism. Or rather it is the same instinct which preserves me from both, the most powerful instinct of all—that of self-preservation. Living as I do in the midst of a kind of spiritual universe, whose very existence is not so much as suspected by so many of us, I can hardly consider myself guilty after the same fashion as others, merely because my sins come under the same dictionary heading.

The terrible and suppliant self-accusation of the psalmist: 'Against Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight', has obviously no particular meaning for numbers of quite excellent people, who, at an awkward moment, would infinitely prefer the presence of God to that of the policeman round the corner.

It is not necessary to have taken a theological degree to realize that evil done in the presence of such a being must reach, even in very small doses, a degree of concentration which renders it deathly, not only to us, but to our neighbour. Anybody can set a bad example. When Christians do so, such bad

example is called 'giving scandal'. This poison which we launch upon the world has been distilled in our own chemical retorts.

Of course I realize that the good Carthusians, who prudently counsel the moderate use of their liqueur, though they cannot help being aware that it stimulates other secretions besides the innocent digestive ones, would be amazed to hear how useful it is in private rooms at restaurants as a valuable and sometimes decisive aid to seduction.

Still, these good monks might answer that they also comfort the sick, the afflicted; whilst our scandal-givers do none of these services.

☞ ☞ God, such simple truths should be told as a child would tell them! They shall be. They are on their way to us all. But that is no cause for rejoicing.

The male and female faithful who go to Lisieux<sup>41</sup> generally come back quite reassured. Yet they have only seen a church like any other—perhaps rather uglier—and a pretty wax doll dressed up in plush to imitate sackcloth. In the absence of anything definite to go on, they at least return with a photograph, ingeniously touched up by the good sisters, so that it entirely conforms to the standard sweet girl popularized by the cinema. For my part I attach little importance to this particular fraud. Whoever the confectioner of the effigy may be, it has now been printed in thousands, and long ago ceased to have anything to do with the poor hands who modelled it, and are now withering under the earth—or soon will be.

I can only think of the wretched who have told her their troubles, of dying men whose last sight of earth she has comforted. It may, after all, have been among the intentions of that mysterious child to allow our wretched world a moment of supreme respite, to give it a breathing space in the shade of its own familiar mediocrity, since those little hands, innocent and terrible little hands, expert in cutting out paper flowers, though chapped to the bone by continuous laundry work, have sewn a seed whose growth nothing can now prevent.

There she lives, under the sod, and pious folk stand gaping sentimentally at the tiny honey-coloured shoot, which hasn't even had time to turn green.

'The spirit of childhood,' they mumble between themselves—'oh, yes, Mrs. So-and-So. You'd think it was some plant, but it isn't a plant, it's an idea, Mrs. So-and-So, a charming, poetical notion, a woman's notion, as my husband says. Because—apart from work and the serious things of life—you do need some poetry, don't you? Modern young people don't know anything about poetry. I was only saying so to my daughter the other day, and she said she was sick of the Little Flower, that it's only used to flavour salad these days, and so on and so forth. Yet Saint Thérèse *must* be on our side, don't you think? She's our generation, you see. She'd only have been about ten years older than me—I might easily have known her.'

✻ ✻ We are always hearing about the victory of Saints, about their triumph. Since they belong to the

Church triumphant, they're bound to triumph there, no getting away from that. One day a year the Church militant invites me to rejoice in this triumph, or even humbly to associate myself with it. I obey. After which there are still 364 days to think of the trials and difficulties, here below, of every one of these captains of adventure.

In 1207, for instance, a little man began to tramp the roads of Umbria. He brought very surprising tidings to men, tidings of the coming of poverty. It was his own coming, the coming of the *Poverello*<sup>42</sup> which he announced, without knowing it. For as long as the Saint was wandering through the world beside Holy Poverty, whom he called his lady, they dared not say too much. But once he was dead, they were all so busy honouring him that Lady Poverty got lost in the crowd. She even forgot her crown, the crown reserved for the coronation, which they solemnly placed on the head of the Saint, amid noisy applause from the rich, amazed at getting off so easily. I think that the most surprised of them all must have been the Saint himself, who had asked for nothing, neither sceptre nor crown, and probably didn't know what to do with these attributes.

No matter! The rabble in gold and purple had had a scare. Phew! After that—business as usual! There had never been such a brisk trade in every type of indulgence. Surely it's worth consideration, that wild dance of motley Renaissance ruffians, princes, ministers, astrologers, cardinals, painters and poets, in cloth of gold, doublets or armour, eaten up with the pox, dancing their hellish round with wild shouts over the tomb of the poorest of the poor, the discoverer

of invisible Americas, who died at the gates of these magic gardens.

(It is true that by a delicate attention from the Spanish Kings, the Superior of the Franciscans whom the former created a grandee, had assigned to him one of the most splendid palaces in Madrid.)

✎ ✎ And then what? Nothing. The thing had to be attempted; it had also certainly to fail. No one except this Saint ever seriously believed in the coming of poverty. No one but this seraphic little man ever hoped that the nations would do it honour. I'm quite aware that any insistence on this one point is somehow insufferable.

"There are plenty of saints who have served the poor. We honour these saints. You say that the honour we do the servants hardly affects the poor whom they serve? One does, one must deplore the fact that the poor are lacking in bread, but honour—that's just a literary attitude."

Well, there's a way to settle all that. Organize the cult of the Unknown Pauper. You can bury him on the Place de la Bourse. And after that there won't be a steel king in Paris, or a coal or a petrol king either, who won't consider it his duty to come and lay a wreath on that sacred stone.

✎ ✎ I quite understand that all my writings should bore you. Be as bored as you like—you have every right to be. But I'm bored with yours. Whenever the occasion presents itself you write page after page

about the Franciscans, and yet the most unashamed of you all wouldn't dare seriously to assert—always allowing for the immense advance in material progress realized since the death of the *Poverello*—that the poor are so much better off. Is that the Saint's fault? No. Then it must be yours. Yours and mine. Ours, in fact. One doesn't need to be a great scholar to know that it would be impossible to suppress the history of St. Francis without mutilating the history of the Church: so much is evident. Well—I have the greatest respect for Franciscans, I admit that they're admirable friars. But between ourselves, quite frankly now, suppose that to-morrow all those excellent men were to put on shoes and become Jesuits, Dominicans, Redemptorists, even Choristers—do you think that would be a sufficiently important event *still* to shake Christianity? Would the slums mind very much? No.

## VI

✿ ✿ The world shall be judged by children. The spirit of childhood shall judge the world.

Of course the Saint of Lisieux never wrote anything of the kind. Maybe she never had any precise idea of the wondrous spring of which she was the herald. She can hardly have expected, I mean, that one day it would stretch over the earth, and that sweet-smelling tides and snow-white foam would cover towns of steel and reinforced concrete, innocent fields in their terror of mechanical monsters, and even the black soaked soil of death. 'I shall bring forth a shower of roses,' she said, twenty years before 1914.

But she didn't know what roses they would be.

✿ ✿ You know, sometimes I imagine what any decent agnostic of average intelligence might say, if by some impossible chance one of those intolerable praters were to let him stand awhile in the pulpit, in his stead, on the day consecrated to Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, for instance:

'Ladies and gentlemen,' he would begin, 'I don't share all your beliefs, but I probably know more about the history of the church than you do, because I happen to have read it, and not many parishioners

can say that. (If I'm wrong, let those who have signify in the usual manner.)

'Well now, I know you're not inclined to worry much about what people of my sort think. And the most pious among you are even very anxious to avoid all discussion with infidels, in case they were to "lose their faith", as they put it. All I can say is their "faith" must be hanging by a thread. It makes you wonder what the faith of the lukewarm can be! We often call such poor creatures shams and hypocrites; but we can't help feeling rather sad about it all. For though you're not interested in unbelievers, unbelievers are extremely interested in you. There are few of us who at some point in our lives have not made a tentative approach in your direction, were it only to insult you. After all, put yourselves in our place. Were there but one chance, the smallest chance, the faintest chance of you being right, death would come as a devastating surprise to us. So we're bound to watch you closely and try to fathom you. You're supposed to believe in hell. So I think that when you look upon us, your comrades on earth, it might at least be with a fragment of compassion, such as you would not refuse to anyone serving a life-sentence here. Mind you, we're not expecting any ridiculous demonstrations, but still the very thought of your dance-partners, bridge-partners, holiday companions going to grind their teeth and curse their Maker for all eternity—*surely* that ought to have some effect on you.

'Yes, we were drawn to you. But now we've decided that you're not very interesting after all, and it's rather disappointing. And we hate to think what



fools we were, ever to have hoped in you, and to have doubted ourselves, our own unbelief. Moreover we can't help noticing that though the faith you profess makes little difference to your lives, since like ourselves you indulge in moderate doses of the six deadly sins, it poisons your melancholy pleasure by the extreme importance attached to the seventh, presumed to be "mortal".

'My dear brothers, when you are not possessed of that heroism without which a Christian is no more than a hog, it is by the neurotic quality of your lust that you are instantly recognizable. You must *really* believe in hell. You fear it for yourselves. You await it for us.

'How amazing that in the circumstances you are so entirely lacking in pathos!

'Christian ladies and Christian gentlemen, if ever you were to be filmed unawares, you would be staggered to see on the screen an entirely different person to the motionless double in your mirror. In the same way it is possible that by dint of examination of conscience you have gradually discovered in yourself qualities which with time have grown so familiar to you, that you innocently believe everybody can see them. But we can't see your consciences! On the other hand, your vocabulary is within our reach far more than you are—though for you the meaning has doubtless been weakened by long use. But it makes us think, I can tell you! What about that mysterious expression: *in a state of grace*? When you come out of the confessional, you're supposed to be 'in a state of grace'. Well—nobody would think so. We're wondering what you do with the Grace of God.

Should it not be shining out of you? Where the devil do you keep your joy?

'You'll say that's none of my business. If such joy was given me, I wouldn't know what to do with it. Maybe. You generally talk in that acid, revengeful way, as though you hated us for the pleasures of which you have deprived yourselves. Can they be so precious in your eyes? Alas, *we* don't think so much of them. You seem to take us for animals who find in exercising their functions of digestion or reproduction, a source of inexhaustible delight, ever renewed, ever fresh, as though such indulgences were forgotten the instant they were over.

'But I assure you the vanity of vanities has no more secrets for us. The most bitter verses in the Book of Job or Ecclesiastes can teach us nothing we don't already know, and they have already inspired our poets and painters. If you will give the matter thought, I think you will agree that we are rather like the men of the Old Testament. The modern world is as harsh as the Jewish world, and its incessant clamour is the same as that heard by the Prophets, thrown up to the skies from huge cities along the water-side. The silence of death is haunting us also, and we answer it, as they did, by cries of hate and of terror.

'And we worship the same calf. To worship a Calf is not, I assure you, the sign of an optimistic people. We are corroded by the same leprosy of which semitic imagination bears the hideous wound throughout the centuries: the obsession of nothingness, the impotence—almost physical impotence—to conceive of the Resurrection. Even in the days of Our Lord, with the

exception of the small community of Pharisees, the Jews had little faith in future life. Perhaps they yearned for it too much—a yearning from the loins, which devours us too. Christian hope never quenches a thirst of that kind, we know. Hope slips through us, as through a sieve. You may say that Israel was awaiting the Messiah. We are awaiting ours. And in the same way again, we are not too sure of his advent: and for fear, also, of seeing our last illusion fly away from us, we rope it firmly to the ground; we dream of a carnal Messiah: Science, Progress, by which we should become masters of the Earth.

‘Yes, we are men of the Old Testament. You may say that in such case our blindness is even more culpable than theirs. I disagree. In the first place, there is no reason to suppose that *we* should have crucified the Saviour. You cannot get away from the fact that Deicides are of the edifying class. You may say what you like, and try all you can to get away from it, but Deicide can never again be regarded as a crime for the rabble. It is a most distinguished, a very unusual crime reserved for opulent priests, sanctioned by powerful middle classes and intellectuals. (In those days they were called scribes.)

‘You may snigger, my dear brothers, but it isn’t the Communists and Blasphemers who crucified Our Lord. And forgive me if I have a good laugh, too. You naturally consider the New Testament inspired, you lay emphasis on each verse of that Holy Book, and can you never have been really struck by the insistence of Jesus on generally white-washing a class of persons, who—to say the least—could hardly have been des-

cribed as judges, solicitors, retired generals (not forgetting their virtuous spouses) nor even—between ourselves—as the clergy? Aren't you a little disturbed by the fact that God should have reserved His most stringent maledictions for some of the very "best" people, regular church-goers, never missing a fasting day, and far better instructed in their religion—saving your presences—than the majority of parishioners to-day? Doesn't such a huge paradox attract your attention? *We* can't help noticing it, you know.

'It is no answer to say that God has entrusted Himself into your hands. The hands in which Christ entrusted Himself, of yore, were not friendly hands: they were consecrated. That you should have succeeded to the Synagogue, and that such succession should be legitimate, is of no consequence.

'We are waiting to share with you a gift which you proclaim to be priceless, and we don't want to know whether God entrusted Himself to you; we want to know what you are doing with Him!'

✎ ✎ 'Dear friends, I'm afraid my exordium is getting on your nerves. But I was distressed by your bad opinion of us, and I am doing my best to make you revise it. I don't think your opinion is thought out, or deliberate. You see unbelievers as they are, and Christians as they should be—an unfortunate misapprehension. Or rather you see us as indeed we should be, if you were Christians, according to the spirit of the New Testament. For then you would have had the right to condemn our callousness. But do you think it is exactly pleasant to be described daily

as the enemies of God by folk so highly supernatural as yourselves? Such a qualification didn't matter very much to our fathers or grandfathers, in the days when your orators were continually invoking against us the sacred rights of freedom of conscience. But for us it might mean the regrettable solicitude of a 'crusading' general.

'No, dear brothers, many unbelievers are not as hardened as you imagine. Need I remind you that God came in Person to the Jews. They saw Him. They heard Him. Their hands touched Him. They asked for signs; He gave them those signs. He healed the sick and raised the dead. Then He ascended once again to the heavens. When we seek Him now, in this world, it is *you* we find, and only you. It is you, Christians, who participate in Divinity; it is you, "divine men", who ever since His Ascension have been His representatives on earth.

'Well, you must admit that one would hardly know it at first glance!

'The Saint whose festival it is this day will not mind my speaking as a child. For I am but a child grown old and burdened with inexperience, and you haven't much to fear from me. Fear those who are to come, who shall judge you. Fear the innocence of children, for they are also *enfants terribles*. Your only way out is to become children yourselves, to rediscover the heart of childhood. For the hour shall strike when questions hurled at you from all points of the earth shall be so urgent and so direct, that you will not be able to answer except by yes or no. When a professor hears a particular murmur slowly rising in a hall, barely perceptible as yet, if he pile on authority and

gravity, that supreme effort will be his final downfall. The meeting flounders in a shout of laughter.

‘Christians who listen to me—that is your peril! It is difficult to follow on a society that has floundered in laughter, because even the fragments will be useless. You will have to build it all up again. You will have to build it up under the eyes of children. Become as children yourselves. They have found the chink in your armour, and you will never disarm their irony save by simplicity, honesty, and audacity.

‘You will never disarm them save by heroism.

‘In speaking thus, I don’t think I am betraying the inspiration of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux. I am simply interpreting it. I am trying to turn it to some human use in the affairs of the world. She preached the spirit of Childhood. The spirit of Childhood is capable of both good and evil. It is not the spirit of resignation to injustice. Nor must you make of it the spirit of revolt, for it would sweep you off the earth.

‘This surmise in no way comforts me, for we should be swept too.

‘Let me draw your attention to a historical peculiarity. When the Jews stoned prophets to death, it was one up for the goys. God had delivered into their hands this hard-headed people, and they made the most of its treasure and wives and daughters. On the other hand, if you won’t listen to the voices of your Saints, we “cop it” along with you, same as you, worse than you, if you will pardon my vulgar way of putting it. As far as that is concerned, the ancient order of Christianity holds good.

‘Take, for instance, the message of Saint Francis. This—if you will forgive my presumption—is what

he might have said: "Things are going badly, my children—very badly. And they're going to get a lot worse. I wish I could be more reassuring regarding the state of your health. But if beef-tea was all you required, I'd have stayed quietly at home, for I was very fond of my friends, and I used to accompany myself on the lute, and sing southern songs to them in the evenings. Salvation is within your reach. But it's no good shirking the issue, for there is only one, and it is called Poverty. I am not bringing up the rear, my children, I am preceding you. I am rushing ahead—don't be so frightened. If I were able to suffer alone, you may be sure I wouldn't have interfered with your amusements. But, alas, God does not allow it. You have incensed my Lady Poverty. You have provoked her beyond endurance; because she is so patient, you have subtly, gradually, lifted your entire burden on to her shoulders. Now she lies, always in silence, with her face to the ground, and weeping in the dust. And you think: there's nothing more to get in our way—on with the dance! But you are not going to dance, my children, you are going to die. . . . The malediction of Poverty means death. Follow me!"

"That advice was addressed to all of you. But not many followed it. You are rather like the legendary Italian soldiers waiting to attack. All of a sudden the colonel snatches up his sabre, jumps over the parapet, and charges off beneath heavy fire, all by himself, crying *Avanti! Avanti!* Whilst his soldiers remain crouching under cover, electrified by such a display of valour, clapping loudly, with tears in their eyes: *Bravo! Bravo! Bravissimo!*

'My dear brothers, I keep on saying the same thing, because it always is the same thing. Had you followed that Saint instead of applauding, Europe would never have known the Reformation, nor the religious wars, nor this horrible Spanish Crusade. Saint Francis was calling to you, but death did not pick and choose: death descended on us all. The danger is the same to-day. It must even be greater. The Saint of Lisieux, whose prodigious career is sufficient token in itself of the tragic urgency of the message entrusted to her, asks you to become as children. The purpose of God is impenetrable, as you say. Yet I cannot help feeling that this is your last chance. Your last chance—and ours. Are you capable of rejuvenating our world or not?

'The New Testament is eternally young, it is you who are so old. And your "old men" are even older than the oldest of you. They go wagging their heads and mumbling: "We don't want either Fascists or Communists," in voices so hollow and cracked that they spew out a tooth at every syllable. Reaction is essential, and we could do with a revolution! But not all your reactions and revolutions put together would suffice. God, can't you forget your decrepit scruple of preserving an order which no longer spares itself, which is destroying itself? Besides, universal order has been replaced by general mobilization. Call back your casuists, before they get mobilized too! Call 'em back, or rather—take 'em away. For the poor things have been indulging in such involved contortions that their legs are round their necks, and their arms are dug into their shoulders, and their heads are on a level with their lowest vertebrae.



Carry them home just as they are, on your stretchers, for they'll never get unknotted by themselves.

'Nothing has been really lost in these two thousand years of useless negotiations, for the New Testament has reached us intact, not a comma missing. Is it therefore so hard merely to answer yes or no to all future questions? Men of honour talk thus. Honour belongs also to childhood. Because it is based on childhood, it is able to escape the analysis of moralists, for your moralist only torments the "mature" fabulous creatures which he has invented for the convenience of his own deductions. There are no mature men, there is no intermediary state between one age and the next. Whoever cannot give more than he receives will surely fall to dust. What morality or physiology have to say regarding such a factor of great importance is of no consequence to us, because we give to the words of youth and age an entirely different meaning. The knowledge of men—and not the experience of man—soon teaches us that youth and age are a matter of character, or soul, if you prefer. A kind of predestination. You will agree that these views are no innovation. The most obtuse observer knows perfectly well that a miser is old at twenty.

'There is a country of the Young. That country is calling to you, that country must be saved. Do not wait for the country of the Old to finish destroying it by those same methods which, in less than a century, not so long ago, defeated the Redskins. You must not let the Young be colonized by the Old! Don't imagine that your words are sufficient protection—even when they get printed. In the days when the American Pharisees were methodically exterminating

a race a thousand times more precious than their own foul conglomeration, did not the sham Indians of Châteaubriand<sup>48</sup> and Cooper share with the sham Scots of Walter Scott, the cosy leisure of romantically-minded old maids, wallowing in pity, as in freshly-spilt blood?

‘Christians, you must become children again, that *we* may become children too. It can’t be so very difficult. Because you do not live your faith, your faith has ceased to be a living thing. It has become abstract—bodyless. Perhaps we shall find that the disincarnation of the word of God is the real cause of all our misfortune. Many of you use the truths of the New Testament as initial themes out of which you compose a kind of orchestral variations inspired by worldly wisdom. In your endeavours to justify these truths in the eyes of political doctrinaires, are you not afraid of placing them beyond the reach of simple men? Why not—just for once—oppose them, just as they are, to our complicated systems, and then wait, quietly wait for the answer, without talking all the time?

‘Joan of Arc was but a girl-saint, yet she put the Paris Doctors of Divinity in a tight spot. Why not let the Christ-Child have His say? You may suggest that’s none of my business. I beg your pardon: to get the better of an order almost as petrified as ours, so many Doctors were unnecessary! That is a historical fact of great significance. I quite understand that you should be attached to your libraries. They have been of great use against arch-heretics. But the world is not merely being poisoned by arch-heretics, it is obsessed by the idea of suicide. From one end

of the planet to the other, it is hurriedly piling up all the necessary adjuncts to this gigantic enterprise. You won't snatch a man from suicide by proving to him that suicide is anti-social, because the poor devil is planning to desert, by means of death, a society which disgusts him. And you go on urging men, in a manner barely distinct from the Moralists—the Morality-Machines—to check their desires! But they have no desires! They have no longer any purposes. They can discover none that is worth an effort.

'Christian Ladies and Christian Gentlemen, I am coming to the end of my long harangue. As an agnostic, I regret being unable to give you my blessing. I remain your very humble servant. To feel much as you do, almost as disconcerted as yourselves in face of these formidable times, is just a little heart-rending. Because, forgive my frankness if I say that you are just as anxious to save your skins as we are. The slogan of crazy despair—*never mind what happens so long as I get out!*—is about to be shaped on your lips, whilst your eyes steal glances at Dictatorships. Anybody, anyhow! What the hell! Get back to childhood, it's not so dangerous.

'We're bound to say that we haven't the slightest confidence in your political capacity. Soon your excess of zeal will have compromised you, even with your new masters. To become the pet aversion of free men, and of the poor, with a programme like the New Testament, is rather ludicrous, don't you agree? Become as little children—there lies your refuge. And when the Powerful of the world ask you insidious questions about all kinds of dangerous problems, such as "modern warfare", "the respect of treaties",

“capitalistic organization”, don’t be ashamed to confess that you’re too foolish to make any reply, and that Lord Jesus shall answer for you.

‘For then the word of God may perhaps work the miracle of rallying together men of good will, since it is for them that it was spoken. *Pax hominibus bonae voluntatis* could hardly be translated into: “First we’ll have a war, and we’ll see later,” could it?

‘I know it is a paradox for us to be awaiting a miracle. But it would be an even greater paradox to await it from you. Therefore we take precautions. We feel we have every right because, mind you, we do not claim to interpret the New Testament, we call upon *you* to carry it out, according to your belief, and the belief of your Church. We do not refute your learned doctors. We refute your political meddlers, because they have given us abundant proof of their presumption and stupidity. The New Testament, I say! When finally you stake everything on a miracle, it is only natural to insist that the experiment should be faultlessly carried out.

‘Supposing, my brothers, that I were consumptive, and I wished to drink the waters of Lourdes, and doctors suggested that they should dilute in it some drug of their own. “My dear doctors,” I would reply, “you have said I was incurable. Let me try my luck undisturbed. In this matter, which is strictly between myself and Our Lady, if I need any go-between, you may be sure I shan’t ask the chemist over the way.”’

## VII

✍ ✍ I started this book during the soft winter months of Palma, full of the sap of blossoming almond trees, succulent as autumn fruit.

I don't suppose this detail has any interest for you. God grant the Alhambra café may return to what it was, each morning, when travellers got off the *Ciudad*, a little weary from their night at sea, and the powerfully fragrant coffee steamed upon marble tables. But the *Ciudad* lies at the bottom of the sea, and fishes are swimming round and round the cabin where once I slept.

In no way do I wish to wrong the kindly manager of the Alhambra. But he will forgive me if I say that his place had nothing about it which could attract a crowd. Still, for me it became one of the great milestones of my life—such as it is—the last, no doubt. For dusk is falling already, the wind is freshening, yet still there is a long stretch of road, and I shall not be able to stop till the gentle night I am awaiting shall close down over me—atoning, saving, setting me at rest.

✍ ✍ Life brings no disillusion. Life makes but one promise, and keeps it. All the worse for those who deny this. They are impostors, or cowards.

Men, it is true, will cheat each other—men alone. All the worse again for those who are poisoned by such cheating. Souls of that kind are in bad working-order, unable to eliminate their toxins. Men have not cheated me, and I have not cheated myself either. I consider I have been let down lightly. The main thing which I can see is the sorrow at the heart of mankind. The sorrow of man is the miracle of the universe.

✎ ✎ Whatever happens from now onwards, the last stage of my life will not have disappointed me any more than the others. I never expected experience to bring me wisdom; I merely crave for a deepening of compassion, a delving deep enough for there to be no risk of the spring of tears ever drying up.

Dear God, I never learnt to love with a fragment of Your Grace, but at least let me not lose my compassion, the rough humble bread of compassion, which we may break together, sinners resting by the roadside, silently, with heads sunk on our breasts, after the manner of the old and poor.

There is nothing really hateful in man but his false wisdom, that germ of sterility, the egg of stone which men hand down from generation to generation, endeavouring each in turn to warm it between their shrivelled shanks. In vain God strives to shake their purpose, begs them in all gentleness to exchange that absurd object for the living gold of the Beatitudes. They eye it uneasily with chattering jaws, heaving horrible sighs. If it is true, as the New Testament tells us, that such wisdom is folly, why, among so

many other more attractive follies, should they have selected that pebble? But wisdom is the vice of old men, and old men do not survive their vice; they take it with them to the grave.

☞ ☞ I don't feel I was made to go broody over a hard-boiled egg. Though you may coax me to have a try, and suggest that I might be more successful than others. Well, I just couldn't.

"Very well then, but why deny this innocent pleasure to the respectable patriarchs that Moralists hold up to you as examples?"

I deny it them ruthlessly. They'd far better run after little girls!

"They can hardly stand up."

Then let 'em read M. Leon Daudet's latest novel.

"They can't see to read any more."

In that case, make senators of them, and they can sit on a bench in the Luxembourg and stare at the pond.

It seems to me that a man of my age can express himself thus, without fear of the ridicule into which impudent young people are bound to founder, for there is nothing more comic than the tetchy solemnity of the decrepit, with the exception of the silly, self-sufficient, jarring loquacity of the very young. I have nothing against old men. Between ourselves, it is even quite possible that at one time they were really deserving of reverence, and that among its many other tragic puppets, the modern world has succeeded in creating a new race of Nestors.

So long as men live very close to the earth, as though shaped and matured in accordance with it, their ex-

perience is but the accumulated result of each day's humble effort. It becomes then a kind of natural saintliness, expressed in tolerance and tranquillity, a form of prudence out of the reach of persons engaged in the battle for bread and wine, for it is inspired from detachment devoid of bitterness, of simple and solemn acceptance. What can the ancient peasantry of France have in common with those seventy-year-olds, as ignorant of the true values of life as an undergraduate of twenty? Poor beasts of ruts and regulations who, even when caught in the mesh of senile paralysis, continue to be as turbulent on their bedpans as in the days when they presided over economic conferences. This order is theirs. It would be pleasant to see them both quietly turn up their toes—them and their 'order'! But that is just where we can't get them to agree with us.

They won't.

To butter up the young at the expense of the old, I swear, is far from what I intend. Anyhow, I should be wasting my time and my trouble. In the late nineties, Jewesses of no particular age, steeped in unguents, sallow with all the toxins of the change of life, painted with white of egg like ancient frescoes, were often seen to claw the fortunes and empty the loins of the 'oofiest' and 'starchiest' members of the noble Faubourg of St. Germain.

I have no hesitation in asserting that the generation which saw the light of day round about 1870 was consecrated from birth to the demons of old age, was baptized in their corrupt stream. It is doubtless thanks to such protection that they succeeded, by a hair's-breadth, in escaping two wars. And the generations



sprung from them seem to bear the same malevolent stigma. The Right and the Left actually worship an identical God, without knowing it, though they may not recognize the same Saints.

☞ ☞ Young people reading these lines will no doubt shrug their shoulders in scorn.

‘Worship old age! How absurd! Why, we never give up our seats to elderly ladies in the tube; we belong to all the Keep Fit Campaigns, and in order to preserve the Body Beautiful, whenever possible we wear nothing at all. . . .’

Oh, I realize you’re a fine lot of fellows, but it is your thoughts, my dear young men, that stink like a hospital ward. More precisely, you have *no* thoughts! You live in those of your elders, without ever throwing open the windows.

There is a ‘youth crisis’, which isn’t likely to solve itself. Present methods are likely to aggravate it. The Masters of the World have some inkling that youth is slipping through their fingers. It is slipping away from all, it is slipping away from itself; its energy slackens, little by little, like steam within a cylinder. The harassing, despotic, crushing solicitude of dictatorships will shortly grind it to nothing.

Authentic *children* cannot be ‘recruited’ any more than poets, and the new systems of education can only result in the rearing of hideous dwarfs playing at propaganda, playing at war, playing at high-explosives. For the spirit of childhood is a reality as mysterious for instance, as virginity. Silliness, ignorance or fear—though it were the fear of hell-fire—cannot make a

virgin. That kind of virginity is on the same stupid level, I consider, as the chastity produced by castration.

✂ ✂ You will say, of course, that to make a man a eunuch is to waste him, whereas the political realist may quite legitimately consider and make use of as a virgin, any young woman certified *virgo intacta* by the medical profession.

In the same way if dictators, either Fascist or Communist, could increase by some superhuman effort, the herd of young unsullied males, let them suppose, if they like, that they are manipulating huge reserves of the spirit of childhood.

The spirit of childhood cannot be observed with the naked eye, you see, cannot be expressed in statistics, any more than the morale of an army. Which is why Signor Mussolini is able to flatter himself that he would be sure to win the battle of Austerlitz all over again, merely by following out Napoleon's plan, and concentrating on the Plain of Pratzen a number of Sicilian or Neapolitan divisions, equal to the Imperial Divisions of those days.

How often have I heard Spanish and Italian Fascists disapprove of the anti-social instinct which makes little French boys shout with laughter at the sight of Punch whacking the policeman.

'There,' they will tell you, 'is a minute gland of anarchist secretion, which our surgeons could so easily cut away!'

Quite so! And in the New Testament these same wise surgeons diagnose a gland of revolution, and a

Hebrew gland, which ought equally to be cut away. Doubtless such surgical intervention would have sufficed, in the Middle Ages, to modify ever so slightly the metabolism of St. Francis of Assisi, and turn that all too attractive enthusiast into a solid common-sense ecclesiastic, with a taste for humanism. Quite! Quite! But all the same, I greatly mistrust their glandular surgery.

And I greatly mistrust their breaking-in methods! Like most Spanish towns, the capital of Majorca belonged to children. Six weeks after the arrival of the armed crusaders, they seemed to own it even more thoroughly, for little mobilized marble-players, armed with wooden guns, marched gravely through the empty streets, with a few of the bigger ones at the head of the procession.

'They're playing at soldiers,' I said. But when their big brothers came back each night from some mysterious expedition, when nearly everyone in the island had stumbled over a corpse some time or other, at the roadside, a corpse crawling with flies with the top of its head blown off, with its back propped up against the hedge, and half its blood-pink brains ceremoniously deposited on its belly—why then a hero becomes a policeman, and isn't a soldier any more.

And so we saw our erstwhile marble-players join the auxiliary police. We saw them exchange their heroic little rifles for rubber truncheons, with lead in the end of them.

This may sound comic—laugh at it as much as you please—but still, terrorism is always terrorism, and if you lived the life of a suspect—that is to say, of fair game for the police—in the days of Maximilian Robes-

pierre, a life in constant danger of being ended by even the vaguest denunciation, *you* would have shivered at the marching by of keen thirteen-year-old *Carmagnoles*.

But I don't in the least want to make you shiver. All I want is to make you think, because I myself have been forced to do so. I didn't altogether realize myself at first. Supposing that I had landed at Barcelona in August 1936, and I had met a band of urchins armed with knuckle-dusters, marching through the streets of that city, all singing the International—you can guess what I should have said to that! But I should have merely regarded as mischievous little boys the very same young gentlemen, brandishing the same weapons, if only they had been shouting: 'Down with the Reds,' rather than: 'Down with the — parsons!' That's how it is. We can't control certain of our reflexes.

But now I have come to think of them both with equal pity.

✎ ✎ I have always felt that the modern world sinned against youth, and by that sin would perish. Obviously the words of the New Testament: 'You cannot serve God and Mammon,' have their naturalistic equivalent: you cannot serve Youth and Covetousness. Those are, of course, generalized statements. They do not assist one in estimating the time required for an evolution which at first appears to be very slow. But at Palma I realized that the immense drive of dictatorship educational propaganda would considerably hasten it.

✎ ✎ It wasn't, I assure you, a revelation from on High! I am even much embarrassed and a little ashamed of choosing some example of what I mean, from so many unimportant incidents. But sometimes a mere pupillary reflex, of no consequence in itself, enables a doctor instantly to diagnose general paralysis. And so . . .

At Majorca I lived in a tiny seaside village, actually a suburb of Palma, about three miles away. I am bound to say that Porto Pi, even in the midst of civil war, was not a very 'lively' spot. The young men were fighting on one side or the other, or on neither side, according to where they found themselves in the world when the thing happened, for Majorcans are great travellers.

Those who stayed at home were not to be seen except on Sundays at church, followed of course by all.

I remember. . . . I remember. . . .

There was an old rag-picker who used to keep the streets clean. He rode in a queer wagon drawn by the ghost of a donkey covered over with a skin that looked as though it had been borrowed from another animal of the same kind, because it seemed far too large for his bones. Although the only son of this 'government official' had been slaughtered by the rebels, a charitable pub-keeper allowed him to sleep in the stable beside his curious beast. My little girl, Dominique, was most attached to them both. But on Easter day she found her old friend hanging—hanging between his dust-bin and his donkey—Easter day, a triumphant Easter day, with the morning full of white seagulls. . . .

There was that fat wench, who used to stand next to me for communion every Sunday. One day we

spied beneath her jacket that had accidentally come unbuttoned—a police-badge: a bright new badge!

We had a cook, too, much loved by my children. A gendarme with the face of an evil priest called on her one day at dawn, bowing and scraping to me.

‘Get ready,’ he said. ‘I’m coming back for you at four.’

She put on her black silk, which was now much too tight for her, and bursting at the seams. She tied up her bundle and wept great heaving sobs the whole of that interminable day. I met her in the road, plodding behind her master, and she gave me the Fascist salute. Horrible!

I remember. . . . I remember. . . . But never mind. I only wish you to realize that though these people had not much gaiety left, they had plenty of time to spare. They would come and sit by the water-side, and the old men would smoke their pipes. That part of the coast is not much frequented by sightseers, who prefer the luxury of Tereno. So these village folk were rather taken aback to see a dozen or so Italian *Ballilas* descend upon them; but of course they didn’t show any surprise at all! One of those little lads had a bathe, with nothing on. The people of Palma are prudish, whether they be republicans or otherwise, and one old grannie decided to give him a piece of her mind. She called him a dirty little brat. The chief then blew his whistle and guards rushed forward and succeeded in shutting up the impudent old lady, though without any great display of zeal. Her companions protested, whilst the men, who always sat a little apart, went on staring vacantly at the horizon, except that they let their pipes go out.

It was then that the young policemen decided to clear the ground with their truncheons. Imagine it. Old men hobbling along in front of those boys, whose ears they dared not pull at any price! At times endeavouring—because of the women watching—to walk with greater dignity, not so quickly, and then the rubber cylinder on their backsides would send them skipping on! Some were crying with rage. But the children had the ‘law’ on their side.

✎ ✎ ‘I don’t suppose they meant any harm,’ you may say. Why, no—they didn’t. They never meant any harm till they were turned into dwarfs, dwarf-men, with the hates of a mature man in the body of a dwarf.

But I know what’s going to happen: not so much owing to maliciousness, as to the logical sequence of events. It would be strange indeed if the nationalism of dictators did not exploit childhood to the full, like any other raw material.

The filthy grinders, the ink-imbibers with bowels of blotting paper, suggest to them that a little boy left to himself displays great inclinations to independence which a provident society should instantly suppress, without wasting precious time in directing it. The child-mind, as discovered by these sinister psychologists, shows strange contradictory tendencies. As, for instance, it is natural for a child to get more attached to a mangy dog than to a really valuable one. On the other hand, there is the tendency to stone the mangy dog to death. The first arises from Celtic mysticism expressed in the absurd axiom: ‘glory to the vanquished.’ The second is already a dawning of Latin

political acumen, for a mangy dog can be of no use, and therefore should be destroyed, though the young executioner should have explained briefly to him how certain refinements of cruelty are a waste of time, and therefore anti-social: he could decently dispatch ten mangy dogs in the time taken to torture one—in short, equal pleasure, and greater profit for the community.

✎ ✎ These psychologists know what they are talking about. It is true that a child is born rebellious, that he lives for as long as possible in a world of his own, made to measure, where there is time and room, by the side of a sublimated daddy and mummy, for creations on almost the same plain of imagination: ogres and fairies, knights, queens for whose sake giants are cloven asunder, and young princes who die of love. When these ghosts have once possessed him, any lad, though sent to an average school, and made to play games, is always liable to become an anarchist, or a poet in the exact sense of the word, that is, a young man unable to write state-propaganda verse.

I happen to know very intimately a young French boy who, early on in the Spanish Episcopal Crusade, had to take part in a punitive expedition. He returned greatly distressed, tore off his blue *phalangistas'* shirt, and kept on saying in a voice broken by suppressed sobs—his old voice, his little boys' voice, which had returned to him:

'The dirty rotters! They've just killed two poor old chaps, two old peasants, ever so old, chaps of at least fifty. . . .'



(Which was, between ourselves, not very flattering to his father, who was just about to reach this final stage of senility. . . .)

A professor of realism might have said:

‘My friend, what you have just seen was an act of social justice. In the first place these two people had different views from those authorized by the State. That they were old and poor should calm your scruples if only you knew how to control the blind reflexes of your sensitivity. For an old man is of less value than a young one. And since the poor do not greatly enjoy life, there is not much harm in depriving them of that which is of so little advantage to them.’

✎ ✎ There may be something to be said for such an attitude of mind. But I repeat that you will never be able to allow for political realism with impunity, and the day when the poor, the infirm and the weak-minded have no other protection in this degenerate world but the natural repulsion of the sensitive towards all suffering, the time will have truly come to recommend suicide to those unfortunates. There is a well-known and most profound saying of people wishing to induce sympathy in each other. ‘Put yourself in his place,’ they say. But it is easy only to put yourself in the place of your equals. At a certain point of inferiority, real or imaginary, this substitution is no longer possible. The refined gentry of the seventeenth century were in no way able to ‘put themselves in the place’ of the niggers who enriched their homes. Young Vittorio Mussolini has published a book on his Ethiopian campaign, of which I quote this extract:

'I had never seen a really big fire, although I often followed the fire brigades. Perhaps it is because somebody must have known of that deficiency in my education, that a machine of the 14th squadron received orders to bombard the Adi-Abo zone with incendiary bombs only. We were instructed to set fire to the wooded hills, fields and small villages. It was all extremely interesting. The bombs had no sooner touched the ground than they exploded in white smoke, and a giant flame rose up, whilst the dry grass began to burn. I thought of the animals. God, how they ran! When the bomb-holders were empty, I began to throw them with my own hands. It was thrilling. A huge zariba, surrounded by tall trees, was very difficult to hit. I had to aim very carefully, and I only succeeded the third time. The poor devils inside jumped out when they saw their roof was on fire, and fled madly. . . . Surrounded by a ring of flames, four to five thousand Abyssinians died of suffocation. It was like hell itself. Smoke rising up to unbelievable heights, and flames turning the black sky red.'

Obviously Signor Vittorio Mussolini never dreamt of putting himself in the place of the Ethiopians!

In the same way the silk-kings of Lyons, who, under Louis-Philippe let their workmen die of hunger, did not put themselves in the place of their inferior brothers, any more than M. Cavaignac, whose famous remark in the Chamber of Deputies, following the Lyons insurrection, is not likely to be forgotten: 'The workmen must make up their minds once and for all that there is no remedy for them, save patience and resignation.' (The French Episcopate of the time did not protest against this assertion.)

Pity, therefore, will always be an unknown quantity. No legislator could safely rely on it, as, for instance, on the love of gain and personal advancement. Pity can find no justification in politics, or rather it can merely be of faint help to your realist in very exceptional cases. He makes use of it because it happens to be there. He'd rather do without.

And anyhow it is difficult to estimate pity any longer. For the last twenty centuries, we have slowly been losing sight of what it is. For the last twenty centuries, the Angel of Our Lord's Charity has been clasping it to his breast, to the sublime warmth of his heart. . . . When that Angel has done with you, my children, not all your political doctrinaires, assisted by out-of-date moth-eaten casuists, will be able to suggest to him an advantageous transaction.

'You may take your "pity" back,' the Angel will say.

And there on the ground you will find a poor tiny animal, pink and blind, with neither fur nor feathers, and it will die of cold in about five minutes.

✎ ✎ I am not trying to identify the spirit of youth with that of charity. I am not a theologian. Experience has simply taught me that you never come up against either without the other, and how the devil am I to get away from that?

Yes, the virtues of the New Testament are a little mad—perhaps there is no harm in dancing before the Ark, like King David? Alas for those priests who in the hope of disarming the satire of philosophers, would dress up those Virtues in respectable attire, and a pair

of horn-rims! In their endeavour to justify Chastity, for instance, in the eyes of Moralists, Hygienists, Economists, Doctors and Games-masters, they have made it look rather silly. I believe it is to such persons that we owe the adjective 'continent'—pardon me if I am wrong. We are certainly indebted to them for the word 'sex'—which is equally meaningless. I don't think a single parishioner would really like to be referred to as 'continent', like Australia, or North America.

Parliamentary praters have, in the same way, made odious the word 'freedom'. Whenever those two syllables are spoken in the presence of any young Fascist, something goes snap in his larynx, and he answers in a voice like Punch: 'There is no such thing as Freedom, we only know of certain freedoms.' For such is the maxim he has dutifully culled from the gums of his centenarian masters, and he will never ask himself of what use such freedoms can be, when the spirit of freedom, which alone made them fruitful, has fled.

As for the word 'justice'—if I still happen absent-mindedly to use it, though I always try to pronounce it 'ustice', in case I should be accused of writing it with a capital, which is an unpardonable mistake in the eyes of decrepit Machiavellis—why, it just makes everybody laugh! Justice is a thing like the League of Nations: rather a joke. . . .

My poor babes, you fancy you are just showing how 'advanced' are your ideas. But brazen old magistrates don't believe in justice either, nor do your die-hard business men. The scepticism of armament kings (and queens) is equal to yours or even greater.

You don't give a damn for justice—what lads you are! And yet you always seem to be on the side of the law, my dears. It's all very well to astound your mother with flaming paradoxes about 'might is right', and other foolery! The dear old thing rejoices in your high spirits, for she knows perfectly well that her beloved little autocrat, at the end of his honourable career, will quietly collect his pension from the State.

God preserve that precious product from the threatening crisis! When the ship starts to sink, you must throw out ballast—and what is it weighs most in the bunkers of modern society, though it has no real value? Scruples. For the State will always be powerful enough and rich enough to make sure of the protection of Order and Property, if the young upper-classes will kindly assist it in shaking off the crushing moral responsibilities inherited from Christianity, which the democracies hadn't the face entirely to discard.

You know how to play your part, you dear young frauds! Though it isn't really very difficult to play, and all you need do is sneer. Nothing easier! You are worth neither more nor less than your grandfathers, and when serious matters are at stake, when it is a question of looking after your money, for instance, you are inspired as they were, from principles of modified pharisaism.

Therefore I shall speak only of your outward appearance, of the gentleman who goes out to dinner and plays bridge, holds forth at his club, takes the chair at board meetings, of the gentleman, in short, whom a certain number of black-tied fellow-men will one day deposit at the cemetery, with all due deference. But

he is rarely of those by whose side a simple woman will lie every night; nor will he come under the judgment of God.

After a few years regular training, this eminently social figure achieves a kind of automatic quality, which allows him to participate, without tiring himself, in conversations that go astray, that is to say, when they reach out towards general ideas and principles. Your grandfathers were propelled in much the same way, and the mechanism is identical. Certain words call forth corresponding reflexes. Only the modern reflex is a little different. Your grandfathers—I am bound to say—rather overdid the ‘righteous indignation’ stunt. Time was when the mere word ‘scrap of paper’ was enough to provoke general apoplexy round any dinner-table of literary, commercial or financial sharks, not excluding the bench. (Now the same reference arouses in the sporting citizens, sprung from their loins, an uncontrollable spasm in the back of the throat, which is their way of laughing.) That wire of Ems! What thumps upon the table! And the submarine warfare! *Disgraceful!* And that wicked Bosch gunner who at a hundred miles range deliberately shot down the little choir-boys of St. Gervais! And the bombing of Strasbourg, the burning of Louvain, the civilian atrocities—those filthy Huns hadn’t any respect for women!

But now these horrors are to be seen all over Spain, Ethiopia, China, and any poor devil who makes some faint protestation in the name of humanity—ha! ha! ha!—would soon be called a spineless ninny by ponderous ladies, terribly ‘armyified’, who have made

up their minds to settle the working classes once and for all—tiresome people who've been giving their poor employers such a time of it, ever since Capitalism began, and been pampered all through, from the cradle to the grave! Besides those Ethiopians are only niggers—savages! What about the Chinese? Oh, they're such an *old* civilization! Make way for the young!

And France?

Which France? We daren't point her out any longer, for the virtuous dictators are disgusted with her. In the days when Jaurès<sup>44</sup> got himself branded the advocate of Germany, if the Kaiser had suggested that he should decide for us which was our authentic France, what an outcry from our patriotic orators! But to-day General Franco, between two shellings of his own Capital, can give our degenerate royalists, who are always sucking up to him, his reasoned explanation of the present, past and future of my country. The royalists have dismissed their princes, who were suspected of lacking a sense of national duty, yet they believe blindly in the solicitude of Signor Mussolini regarding our advent to greatness and honour!

## VIII

✎ ✎ When I turn back to the first page of these musings of mine, it is with strange melancholy. And yet I am content. Because I said I would go on until the end. And I have. I have come almost to the end of my book.

The secret of such contentment is perhaps—some kind of escape. I would have preferred not to have spoken of the people who, throughout these pages, fancy they have only been listening to a cry of wrath or defiance. The opinion of such persons does not greatly preoccupy me, for my mind is free of their judgment, though my eyes are not free of their presence. I can see them, but I have no wish to mock them. They all belong to that portion of humanity which stands for submission. In a properly organized society, nobody notices them, except their nearest and dearest, their employers or their employees. They are quite unobserved. They only become absurd in times like ours, because they were not made for these tragic circumstances, and such glaring contrasts bring a smile to the lips.

Any Sunday you may catch sight of an elderly and respectable gentleman on his way to church, in a black coat and striped trousers, and you'll think no more of it. But give him a last careful brush-down, and transport him amid the ruins of Shanghai, and the



poor old boy will appear grotesque or horrible—according to your own mood.

The Conservative leagues are overflowing with military and civil officials to whom crafty journalists are always suggesting that the salvation of France lies in their hands. Time was when these innocents worked off their spleen on the Bosches. Now the trade-union workman has taken the place of the Bosch.

But how can you expect such persons to have any idea at all concerning even the most legitimate social reform? Inoffensive persons who all their lives have shaken in their shoes before directors, colonels, or tax-inspectors, and who innocently flaunt in their button-holes, as recompense for forty years of dyspepsia, the same Legion of Honour which once used to be presented to authentic old soldiers, in the time of François I? If they are not sensitive to this monstrous absurdity, how can one expect them to possess even the most elementary sense of self-respect, justice or history?

In the minds of such creatures a discontented workman must be 'wrong' because he's making a fuss. Whosoever threatens to dislocate the magic spell of Trade or Property is mortally offending God.

The shock of my life was to see a certain number of these worthy citizens turn royalist. The fact is that it had been drummed again and again into their silly heads that royalty was 'respectable'. Now, thank heaven, they are beginning to fear that even Princes may have their 'Red' tendencies. So there is every hope that they will become republicans once again.

I do not want these people to disappear. I would

merely wish them to stand on one side for a while, whilst what is left of the true French gets a chance to come to terms. They have every reason for wishing us to come to terms. But far from being able to assist in the matter, they are even quite incapable of imagining such a thing. They don't really mind about our disagreements; they are merely disturbed by all the fuss and noise, and they keep snapping: 'Be quiet, be quiet,' in feeble tones of menace or self-pity. They are so terribly put out by the claims of the 'working classes' because it just gets on their nerves!

And yet the head of a huge industry, which for the last five years had been endeavouring to adjust salaries, confessed to me, this very day, that to every five per cent rise in wages, the retailers instantly responded by a ten per cent rise in food-stuffs. These hideous octopi are thus slowly sucking the life out of our people, yet our Conservative newspapers conspire to hush up this well-known fact. There are probably many reasons for this—I will refer only to the main one: the octopi work silently. And that's all that matters to the supporters of law and order. They welcome any suppression that will close the mouths of the brawlers.

If you make a fuss when you're bled, you're just an anarchist and you deserve no mercy.

✂ ✂ Such very nervy people would be well advised to keep out of things. It's no good trying to arbitrate when you get so easily upset. I quite understand that they should find the trade unions very trying. Then why not let people of another kind deal with them?

These poor devils are in a blue funk before they start. They make me think of a certain kind of 'misunderstood' woman, who'll put up with anything—even a good hiding—so long as you keep telling her, between smacks, that's she's always right, really, right—right—*right!*

The matter is quite easy to prove. I defy you to venture the most discreet, the most innocuous approval of some small point of the workers' programme, without these neurotic effeminates curling up under your eyes, like sensitive plants.

'So you're a *Communist*, are you?' they gasp, in the same way that Noel Coward's heroines might exclaim: 'So you just take me for a little fool?'

How can the young of France be still taking any notice of these nervous invalids? I am not denying the dangers of totalitarian Communism. But were it even nearer than I fancy, it would be all the more necessary to get rid of them, for their place is in the cellar. And the House of France is by no means immune against their hysterical suspicions.

✂ ✂ I consider I have the right to say this because I am not a democrat. The democrat, and particularly the intellectual democrat, is in my opinion the most loathesome type of bourgeois. Even among the more sincere and praiseworthy democrats, you come across that unconscious, revolting smugness: 'I spend day after day in the slums, you know . . . I don't mind the smell . . . I don't mind *what* I see. . . . I'm ever so patient with the Poor. . . . That's my notion of Christianity. . . . It was Our Lord's way.'

Sorry, but it was *not* Our Lord's way. If He mixed with a large number of poor people—and they were not all of them blameless by any means—it was probably because He preferred their company to that of business men. Distinguished persons can, if they wish, confine themselves to the obviously more flattering explanation of deliberate mortification on the part of our Divine Master.

At all events, for my part, I would wish to sit down to table every day of my life with old monks or young soldiers in love with their job. I don't mind the talk of an honest country squire either, because I'm fond of dogs, and I like a day's shooting and the sight and sound of young woodcock taking cover in the spring. But when it comes to the potentates of the commercial world, discussing the last motor-car exhibition or the economic situation—why, I just can't help laughing. But I'd really rather they kept out of my way. What we call a distinguished man to-day is precisely the kind of person who distinguishes himself in nothing at all. How can one even distinguish one from the other? After a few days' cruise together, on the *Normandie*, for instance, and provided that in its youth the beast has been well trained, you can't possibly tell if its daddy sold ties behind a counter or was Home Secretary.

In short, any authentic man, workman or peasant, who has the courage to stand for what he is, says what he thinks, remains silent when he has nothing to say, seems to me far more worthy of 'distinction', than those miserable shadows who have their patter at their finger-tips, yet would be terrified of altering one word for fear of a box on the ear.

Our dear old dons are not going to persuade me that

such people are humanity at its best, and that their refinement is part of our national heritage, along with the poetry of Jean Racine. Poor old dons! They used once to mistake M. Anatole France for a genius, and the late Signor Gabrielle d'Annunzio for a pukka Renaissance grandee—well, well, well! Real aristocracies are undeniable. But it's no good talking about them now, because they are no more. Both 'sides' still have in their ranks individuals of great worth. Our work is to unite them.

All else is useless.

✍ ✍ I fear it would be too much to expect either the Conservative or Socialist Press to assist in the matter. The most terrifying of our social symptoms is that the 'practices' of these rival newspapers are in a way the whole bone of contention. It has become a struggle between two 'practices.' No longer even class prejudices, but a far more profound rivalry, which each day grows more bitter, and not only more bitter but more generalized, attaining universal proportions, and thus becoming associated with the most absurd misunderstandings.

The abject competition of these printed forms controls the destiny of many erstwhile great countries. Why talk about 'class wars'? This particular scum of hate is so slimy and thick that it has taken their place. For the people of France to secrete such pus, they simply must be diseased.

Only this morning I heard of Hitler's troops entering Vienna. 'Good news for the Right Wing,' observed the little newspaper-man, selling *Le Soir*.

And five minutes later quite a decent fellow I know stopped me in the street and said: 'Look where your "United Fronts" lead to!'

We stood and watched them marching by, like a beggars' meet, old men and old women demanding the old-age pension, which has so many times been promised them, and so many times deferred.

'Dirty rotters!' exclaimed my companion. And he shook his fist at those derelicts.

Oh! my country! . . .

✎ ✎ There are no more classes. A living class can get rid of its own poison and venom. Our 'parties' can get rid of nothing. One can come to terms with a living, organized class, because their needs are alive, and sometimes even rancour will be sacrificed to desire.

But in the midst of the present chaos, what chance is there of one word of freedom piercing through? According to the Conservatives the French workman is so pandered to that he is likely to swell up and burst with good living. I would refer them to the article of M. Louis Gillet, published in *Paris-Soir* yesterday. M. Louis Gillet is the son-in-law of an academician, as well as being one himself: he could hardly be described as a Bolshevik.

'Do you know', he writes, '*that eighteen per cent of French families, which means ONE family out of FIVE, live one on the top of the other in one room? They are the poorest families, that is to say the largest. ONE ROOM where eight or ten people are piled up together eating, cooking, washing up, washing themselves, and sleeping. One room which as a rule*

*leads out onto the stairs, the breathing tube of the entire tenement, never free from the stench of cooking and washing, where each 'home' during the daytime will load up their bed-linen on the banisters to air it—for there is no other place where this can be done.'*

✎ ✎ Our smug little Fascists will no doubt see nothing wrong in that. Moreover they will see no reason why in the next war these helots should not repay, with their miserable substance, the maternal solicitude which the nation has invariably shown them! And they will regard these few lines in the light of high-treason. And yet . . . you should hear their daddies talk about France ever since 'trade has been so awful!' They talk about France just like pimps talk about a whore who is no longer a paying proposition.

✎ ✎ Hitler's troops are marching through Vienna as I write. The Nazis have taken over the heritage of the Hapsburgs, in the name of the 'Red' menace over Europe; but surely we ourselves sacrificed that heritage to Italy in the year 1917. The Emperor Karl offered us peace. For the sake of a nation which had no national tradition, a merely paradoxical nation, the sheerest nineteenth-century creation of freemasonry in every land, we consented to another year of war. This opinion of mine is not merely political. It is that of the priests who instructed me: there is not a Christian child of my generation whom they did not teach, together with his catechism, that the confiscation of the Papal States by Italy was a threat to the liberty of the Church.

Nowadays Catholic opinion is joyously resigned to the thought of a forest of bayonets rising between the Holy Father and his children. I'm not in the least accusing the Sovereign Pontiff, who need only answer to God for his acts of government. Those I blame are the imposters, who snivel and become reassured according to orders. Such men must find their vow of chastity very easy to keep.

✂ ✂ 'You will not live to be old, young men of France.'

I wrote that at the end of the 'Great Fear'. But now I am rather more afraid that they may live to be too old. I fear they have lived over long as it is. The huge graveyards of the last war witnessed their first steps and earliest play. Sometimes a few of the survivors came peeping at them over the railings, and would shake their heads and tip-toe back home, with the small bunch of freshly gathered flowers which they had not dared place on any one of those tombstones, for fear of casting a cloud over the joyous babes. They put the little bunch in a jug, to keep fresh, but it didn't keep fresh, and they watched that die too. . . .

Year after year, the children grew up. Whilst we grew older, which is not the same thing. Our ordeals had humbled us.

There is no doubt that a large number of heroes were 'deceived' by their wives between 1914 and 1918. Yet that can be regarded as individual bad luck. Whilst the abject post-war celebrations, bearing along, helter-skelter in a gigantic ragtime, the one-armed and the crutch-bearer, the mutilated and the gassed, with



their cheek-bones starting out of their faces, sicking up their lungs in the lavatory between the dances—such indecency, I say, put horns on us all. France herself was making cuckolds of us—no dishonour in that! But we couldn't help feeling rather ashamed, and we kept away from the graveyards.

Only now and again we heard a kind of rising murmur, as of bees at work, coming from those mournful estates.

'What the devil can those kids be up to?' But after all—it didn't matter. The dead were dead enough, as far as they were concerned. 'They must be having a hell of a time, there!' we reflected. 'Only natural, at their age. Since the boys are all dried up by now, and their bones washed clean under the sod—why it's quite a healthy spot, and those bright young things have always been keen on out-door life: they'd far better do their love-making out there, than be hanging around brothels.'

'Oh, they're not making love, I assure you,' came a surly, elderly voice at our elbow. 'At night we hear ever such a digging and scraping going on. I think they must be very hard-working young people indeed.'

Well, you know, those surly old gents were quite right. They *had* been ever so hard at it! One day we went round to have a look at them—a lovely day it was, some kind of holiday. The little Devils! They'd fixed it all *their* own way. Not a trace of the old graves we knew so well. Not a tree, no more flowers, not a blade of grass, nothing but freshly turned soil which reminded us of the Somme offensive—do you remember? There were two enormous funeral piles facing each other, like hills of mud. Yes, all the boys

had been massed together in two heaps, a right heap and a left heap: Popular Front and National Front.

And between them was barbed wire.

✂ ✂ Poor kids! They thought they were doing right, and they must have taken a lot of trouble. Such a dismal sorting out, and all those bones to shift! What a job it must have been! They managed it, but of course they never could have managed it alone. They were assisted by Hate. Implacable hate, inextinguishable impotent hate: the hate of old men.

If France in 1918 was cut short at the height of armament manufacturing, and found herself overloaded with stocks that could no longer be used, she had at all events far greater reserves of hate, that could be used.

From 1914 to 1918, the men at the front were sustained by some kind of honour. Those behind were sustained by hate. With a very few exceptions, everything that was not actually engaged in fighting, was putrid, putrid beyond remedy, putrid beyond redemption after those four blood-soaked years. You are all putrid, I tell you! These are not meaningless words. There are proofs. I defy any average well-educated schoolboy to write an essay, for instance, on the kind of literature from which these miserable beings sucked the substance of their sedentary patriotism—without giving it up in despair. Lies and hate! Hate and lies!

The vision of our noble people which has fought its way all through history with varying fortunes, found itself at the mercy of a tribe of drivellers, sons of Greek

slaves, Jews and profiteers, for whom war has never meant anything but plundering or revenge. Creatures of such foul origin that even respect for the enemy seemed to them a ridiculous prejudice, liable to 'demoralize' their own side!

It is you, dogs, that would have taken the heart out of us, had we deigned to read your stuff! Would God had allowed us to cudgel your ranting mouths to silence, when we came home on leave! But you were shouting at the top of your voices, foaming with such abundance, that we felt rather uncomfortable with our crutches and crosses—we were afraid of seeming less patriotic than you, impostors! Your huge impudence explains, though it may not justify, the timidity of men home from the Front. To think that we might have refused to shake hands with any decent enemy, with whom we had been fighting, and yet could take orders from *you*, and stomach your flattery!

For the Armistice didn't shut you up, nor did 'Peace'. You were so frightened for your own skins, you hypocrites! Listen: I swear that *we* would have been only too glad, once we had made sure of the fair price of our victory, to make honourable peace with a famished people, remembering that they had sacrificed everything in this struggle against us—even their wretched children who had had to be reared without milk. We should have thought of those many German women, those wives of soldiers, who with parched breasts lay beside their ghostly new-born babes, and the foul black bread which was all they had—and died.

We should have said: 'Don't go too far, you hypocrites! We have won, but you had better not humiliate them. Enough talk of gunners chained up to

their machines, and German trials. Enough talk about "Huns". You won't keep sixty million men under the perpetual menace of preventative occupation, with frontiers all open.'

But alas when they ceased hurling insults, they began to sweat with terror. They began to scream: 'Safety First! Safety First!' in such piercing tones that many other envious European countries, who were secretly becoming our enemies, pretended to block their ears, and spoke of our morbid obsessions.

But *we* were not obsessed. We would have given a great deal—even our mythical war-trophies—to dry up the flux of your bowels. But nothing can stop senile diarrhoea. We ought to have realized that as Germany got on her feet again—first one knee, then the other—the festering of hate would not dry up, but would gradually turn back into the heart of our own country.

The maniacs who had no mercy on a beaten, blood-sucked Germany, have great respect for her now! No doubt they will soon get quite fond of her. . . .

✍ ✍ No young man to-day is likely to waste his time reading over old war-newspapers. He doesn't know anything about the War, and he doesn't want to know. Therefore he will never know that France at that time was divided in two halves, but that the heroism on the front was not able supernaturally to compensate for the hastened demoralization behind the lines, the avidity, the indignity, the cynicism, and the stupidity. On the eleventh of November 1918, it was as though the France of our ancestors had fallen at one blow,

with her face to the ground. As for the other—one can hardly call her France—with pockets crammed full, an empty heart, and nerves to pieces, she stands behind her politicians, her journalists, her financiers, her miserable pimps, her puppets and her slaves, and she stands for what we think.

✎ ✎ Dictators have made of power the sole instrument of greatness. But the systematic use of power entails much cruelty, and the disinterested young heroes of the new generation will soon have made cruelty into a 'manly' virtue. Then mercy will seem to them about as silly as at one time chastity appeared to young French bourgeois.

It really requires the vast credulity of respectable people to fancy that individuals will in some way continue to honour their signatures, when the masters of the world are always going back on theirs! What is the good of making out you can repress political or social anarchy, by means which ridicule all principles, and so favour a kind of moral anarchy which will eventually give birth to a political anarchy far worse than the first? We already know what universal war is like. Universal peace is much the same, or at least there is not much difference. In the one as in the other, governments show themselves to be literally 'capable of anything'. Is that what M. Bertrand de Jouvenel calls the 'school of Power' to which 'Europe has awakened'? 'Conditions in Europe during the next century', concludes this gentleman-follower of Nietzsche, 'will necessitate the selection of the most virile qualities, for life will be in continual danger.'

Obviously, as treaties will have no more value at all, we shall be hard put to it to cut a plate of bread and butter for the children, without anxiously wondering if the Bacteriological War Service may not have sown therein the germs of infantile paralysis! When our grandfathers wanted a thrill of that kind, they wisely left their families at home, and went off on their own to live with the cannibals for a while.

Perhaps because that sort of thing doesn't particularly attract me, I may be accused of lacking virility. Maybe. Everything is possible. Everything is possible—even to receive from certain journalists whose names are at the tip of my pen—lessons in virility!

But there is no equivocation and no lying which can stand against absolute proof. All the nations are desperately re-arming for a very simple reason: **THEY CAN NO LONGER COME TO TERMS BETWEEN THEMSELVES, BECAUSE THEIR SIGNATURES ARE QUITE VALUELESS.**

I don't think any human society has ever known such shame. Anarchists can well be delighted. But what about your men of law and order? Don't interrupt them: they have not yet finished applauding the absurd collapse of the League of Nations. And each time that in China, Abyssinia, Spain or elsewhere, we hear the rending of paper and the flush of water bearing it down the main drain, these creatures bridle with pompous satisfaction: Ha! Ha! Ha! And they become more and more cheerful when you suggest that to the downrightness of statesmen will shortly be added all the mechanism of war, and that there is no form of warfare, however atrocious, which

from now onwards may not be possible, though it would arouse but a sense of monstrous competition.

When in the supreme name of National Interest, dictators will get their armies to eat up the prisoners, to avoid waste, some of our bright young men will most probably explain: 'You must be a *man*, Comrade!', and we shall read in the *Osservatore Romano*<sup>45</sup> a prudent, carefully-worded message to the eminent heads of Catholic states, suggesting that out of filial deference towards the Holy See, they should at least forbid such tinned food on Good Friday.

Manly indeed! Are you so very 'manly' yourselves, you charlatans? I observe a certain number of distinguished persons in your ranks, whose virility is on a par with their patriotism, and surely you cannot expect me to jump up and cry *Vive La France* each time a Nationalistic Pansy puts a tricolour dressing on his posterior!

✂ ✂ I am not attacking your principles, you men of law and order. The 'order' party—has there been an 'order' party?—is yet to be formed. You are but an amalgamation. Whose rights do you stand for?

'We stand for no right.'

Then what is your doctrine?

'We have no doctrine. We all stand together in order that things shan't get much worse.'

That is what I thought. You oppose lesser-evil to evil. But France has no use for mediocrity.

'Our adversaries are as mediocre as we are, and they're far more dangerous!'

All the better. France would rather have them

dangerous. That way she hopes for some kind of a change—a pathetic illusion of hers, because the mediocre have never changed anything.

You men of order: the people are not so easy to seduce as the credulous parishioners of your parties. When you speak of 'order' to the middle classes, they understand at once, because for the last fifty years, under any kind of bourgeois régime that word stood for prosperity in trade and industry. But it doesn't have the same sounding in the ears of the people.

The Liberal order was an 'order'. It reigned over France for more than a century. In those blessed days the workmen of Normandy, as testified by the Rouen Chamber of Commerce, 'never earned enough to feed their families, though they worked eighteen hours a day'. Most of them lived on three or four sous of bread and potatoes. Under-nourished children of eight were employed as thread-winders, and spool-bearers, and remained on their feet for sixteen hours at a stretch. At Mulhouse, as at Lyons, the average expectation of life among the sons of manufacturers and tradesmen was twenty-eight years, but that of the children born to weavers and silk-workers was exactly one year and a half.

Oh, I know you have no intention of restoring such a state of affairs. But the middle classes of those days called it *Law and Order* just the same. Generals and officials, even ecclesiastics spoke of it with trembling voices, deploring the fact that it should be threatened.

Under the circumstances the mistrust of the workers towards the middle classes is quite easy to understand, particularly as the latter, you must admit, have never



been terribly enthusiastic about this type of social reform!

You must break down their mistrust, at all costs, and in order to break it down you must reform yourselves first, smash your own limitations.

Your limitations are political. Your heads are politicians of the worst kind of policy, the policy of opposition. The habit of opposition has dried up the very marrow of their bones. They think, feel, act in continuous opposition. The vice of conservatism has destroyed in them all depths of sincerity, all creative imagination.

✎ ✎ I have no party. I aspire to no Academy—neither the Goncourt nor the Other. If I belong in some queer way to the 'upper class', it is not as a capitalist, I can tell you! The present state of a writer is very like that of the proletariat. Of course the commercial value of any work has little or nothing to do with its true value. Think of the sales of M. Georges Ohnet<sup>46</sup>! Therefore I can say without appearing foolish that I am—among French writers—one of the most indebted to the good will of my readers. And yet, between 1926 and 1936, my books, which have been translated into most languages, have never brought me in more than an average of about 35,000 francs a year. Still I have managed to bring up six children, and so consider I have 'done my bit', both for my class and my country.

Well, you men of order, I remember a time when you bemoaned your helplessness. You hadn't the newspapers on your side, you said: 'Ah, if only we had the

Press! But you *have* got it now. It is yours! The chief newspapers belong to you almost entirely. Thousands of unfortunates who mistrust France and have never known her history except through school-books, where partisan hate is squirted over every page, people whose ignorance makes them quite incapable of appreciating the true worth of a culture which they can only share unconsciously, people who will never read Corncille or Racine—can nevertheless hear each day of their lives the powerful loud-speakers of your Press, shrieking out above all the traffic: 'France speaking! Anyone wanting to see France need only take a look at our National Front!'

I say that whether you are aware of it or not, such a suggestion is a crime against the Fatherland. You have no right to impose on my country the insolent ultimatum: 'Communism or us!' Fifty years of experience have gone to show that you will never know how to address the people in a manner worthy of them and of their past.

You have retained from the erstwhile Clerical Party which has fortunately ceased to exist, the vocabulary, methods and even the unbearable condescension: the rancid unctuousness, which of all forms of eloquence is the most repellent to the true spirit of the French.

You have no sense of the ridiculous. When M. Briand was presiding over the fate of the League of Nations, at the height of the disarmament fervour, you stigmatized the workmen who cried 'Down with war!'

To-day that France is being spat on by all the dictatorships, you stand for a military 'pacifism', and

think yourselves so clever! You fancy you can reassure us with regard to the future of Spain, because you have weakly brought home from Burgos, as a faithful poodle carries his master's milk-can, a declaration from General Franco which any sensible person can see is worth rather less than the paper it is written on.

I am not in favour of intervention in Catalonia. I merely state that even though it has been cynically exploited by Russian propaganda, the sense of solidarity which urges our French workmen to go to the help of their Spanish brothers in distress, is a noble sentiment which you have no business half-wittedly to deride. Such foolery is of a kind which the people do not forgive.

During the halcyon days of Catholic Action in Spain the great ladies of Palma, on the advice of their confessors, deliberately chose for their charitable enterprises, the 'poor' suspected of advanced ideas.

'We've nothing to do with politics!' they purred. 'Nasty politics! We come to you in the name of Christ. There's no such thing as "reds" or "whites" as far as He's concerned!' (a tinkling laugh). 'I've brought you some tobacco of the kind you like!'

A few months later I was asking one of these charitable district visitors how her protégés were getting on.

'Don't mention it,' she said. 'I daren't inquire. They must all have been shot. . . .'

## IX

✎ ✎ The dead must be atoned for. Reparation must be made for the dead, that they may deliver us when the time comes. The reconciliation of the living is only possible when the dead have been reconciled.

It is not so much the errors and sins of the dead that poison our national life as the malice and disgust which has survived them, exploited by a few party leaders whom we could count on the fingers of one hand. Let us look them in the eyes for the last time, those enemies of humankind, before turning from them to the pages of another book.

We shall not die at their hands.

✎ ✎ But remember that it is absurd to try and 'use' Hitler against Stalin, for instance, because the rivalry of these Reformers is justified by the sameness of their methods. The former exploits the mystic of race, the latter the mystic of class, in order to achieve the same thing: the rational exploitation of human thought and endeavour for the sole benefit of worldly values. This is a vast reform, of incalculable significance, when you think that the quest, protection, and illustration of spiritual values have until now absorbed the best of human effort. Millions of men have fought and died for metaphysical beliefs to which

thousands of men dedicated their minds and hearts. A small portion of the heroism spent in the conquest of eternal life, would have founded a million empires!

Such a view-point is not yet familiar to many. Yet if there were but a dawning of realization, it would spread like lightning. One has but to think how the modest and only fragmentary successes of experimental science have terribly weakened the religious instinct. The sheer materialism of the last century had at least the advantage that souls of real dignity could not stomach it. But now modern reformers have found a way to incorporate the ideals of sacrifice, greatness and courage. And so the peoples are able to break with God without feeling the agony of the break, almost unconsciously, in a state of exaltation much akin to that of Saints and Martyrs.

They cannot possibly be aware that universal hate lies at the end of this experiment.

✎ ✎ Young men who read this book, whether you like it or not, you should at least regard it with curiosity. For this book is the testimony of a free man. It is possible that before your hairs have turned white, such an enterprise—to raise one's voice against the Masters—will be merely insane. I say 'insane'—not courageous, nor even dignified. Liberties that have long been out of use, become rather absurd.

It is said that a Roumanian chemist has discovered a new gas, which if mingled with the air, in the faintest proportions, is capable of sending anybody to sleep who breathes it. I can well imagine the Masters of to-morrow disposing of a perfect canalization of such

a gas. A few taps could be turned on, and the entire populations would be plunged in sleep. Then the police could at leisure pick out undesirables, who would wake up on the electric chair.

Under such circumstances any madman trying to oppose his will against that of the State will be merely an object of pity.

✎ ✎ The Reformers are not concerned with me, and right they are. I sit all the more at my ease, and watch them against the light, from the depths of my own unknown destiny. I watch them without hate. Whosoever sees in them no more than the conscious tools of some policy or other is blind indeed. Many misunderstandings would be cleared up over-night if we substituted 'Reformer' to the ridiculous description: 'Dictator.'

✎ ✎ The first Reform, that of Lenin, carried out under the most unfavourable conditions, and tainted by Jewish neurosis, is gradually losing its original outline. Signor Mussolini's, which began on the violent lines of Sorel, is now as many-faceted as the hefty workman himself, who had been for so long chasing this mirage, through elementary manuals of sociology, history and archeology, all the sham glitter of cheap antiquities. This workman with his air of farcical heroism, his plebeian good-fellowship, broken by fierce fits of temper, his cynical superstitious exploitation of a Catholicism in itself as ornately empty as St. Peter's in Rome, was doubtless no more

than the nervous reaction of a people already hypersensitized to the early signs of approaching crisis.

Only a few years before, but many hundreds of miles away, the Russian storm had convulsed all Italy. The Wagnerian tempest, gathering in Central Europe, was for her a more serious disturbance still. What can Erasmus do beside Luther? What man of ordinary common sense would ever have backed the humane Girondists, or even Danton, against Robespierre and Saint-Juste?

Fascist Italy, in the presence of this terrible new Enchanter, behaves exactly like an invert with a male. Not one detail, such as, for instance, the adoption of the German goose-step, which does not irresistibly remind me of certain forms of Freudian mimicry. How can one express it? Lenin and Trotsky were no more than the Jewish prophets, the harbingers of a German revolution still in the mists of what is to be. Mussolini throws wide the golden gates of the sea, and amid the rumble of tanks and army lorries, the whole childhood of Europe has just been slain at Salzburg with the child Mozart.

There is only one Reformation and one Reformer; the teutonic demi-god, mightiest of Germanic heroes, in his little house among the mountains with his German virgin, his flowers, and his faithful hounds.

✿ ✿ The greatness of such a man is not to be despised, and it is not a barbarous greatness, but it is impure. The source of that greatness is impure. It was born of German humiliation, of Germany debased, decomposed and bankrupt in 1922.

It has the face of German misery, transfigured by despair, the face of German lechery, when the unnameable, untouchable reporters from all over the world purchased for a pound note the hideous delight of watching the sons of dead heroes dance in their midst, powdered and painted and scented, swaying their haunches and their empty bellies. It is the sin of Germany, and it is our sin, too. From that unforgiving archangel's face she has not even deigned to wipe our spittle. Our bygone hate flames from her eyes, our bygone insults are the sombre furrows of her brow. She has not forgotten. She will not forget. Neither her own crimes, nor ours. Her pride assumes them all.

Would to God her inspiration were merely vengeance! But there is no pit of vengeance so deep that it might bury the secret of her past shame. She has known disgrace in all its shapes—even that of pity.

German power, anathematized by the world, intends to redeem the world. She thinks herself equal to such a gigantic task. It seems to her a thousand times lighter than forgetfulness.

✎ ✎ This fantasy isn't new or strange. After all, there is no redemption of the flesh, except through pain.

'I shall force you to suffer,' says the Chosen Race, 'but I shall suffer with you. You shall be mine, if I can suffer better than you, and longer.

'That is the meaning of the word conquest, of which bastard peoples are terrified, because all they want is a pleasant time. One of our great men, a Saint of the German Fatherland, said that might was



right. It is true that might creates right, because it has paid for it by the sacrifice of the weak and the sacrifice of itself—the victor and the vanquished mingled in the same holocaust. It is the flaming sword from the skies which strikes down the victim whose blood still flows upon the sacrificial stone, propitiating. Because we oppose the German conception of Right to your law-givers and your priests, you call us Barbarians. But we regard you as degenerates, and the most venerable of human traditions testifies in our favour. Two thousand years of Christianity-mongering have so entirely degraded you that you are always on the side of the slave against the Master, on the side of the victim against the Sacrificer, whose hands are consecrated. But Germany in her greatness is not going to bargain with you. She is throwing open for you, as a valiant brother, the chasm of blood and fire, from which you shall arise purified.'

Dear young cads of the new realist generation, these words are not addressed to you. The word paganism only stirs in you scholastic memories. You don't care two hoots for Christianity, but nevertheless Christianity watches over you and your puny fates. It has shaped your outlook. Your imagination is Christian. Which is why you identify Herr Hitler with yourselves, and make of him the 'strong silent man', of whom your fathers so guilelessly dreamed. You are almost liable to compare him to M. Georges Clemenceau.

You do not pay much attention to the terrible symphony with ever-swelling rhythm, bearing whole

countries off their feet in a relentless crescendo. And even if you were to listen, you would not understand it, any more than your grandpapas could make head or tail of Wagner. Such themes do not stir your imaginations. Because those imaginations are Christian, as I said before. You have no ear for certain voices, though they are the voices of the earth itself, and the earth-gods, which Christianity only managed to smother for an instant—a paltry twenty centuries.

The earth-voices proclaim their own Beatitudes, though they are not the same which you hear at mass, read in your missals.

Those voices say: 'Woe unto the weak! Woe unto the sick! The strong shall inherit the Earth. They that mourn are cowards, and shall never be comforted. They that hunger and thirst after mere justice, fish for the moon and feed on the wind.'

It is easy to give a cynical twist to such maxims. The miraculous thing is that, almost unknown to you, even though you more or less obey them in your social life, they seem to you hateful. You see, yours is a Christian consciousness. It seems to you only natural that God should not have blessed the wisdom of worldlings, that which confers honours, fortune and wealth. You forget that all through the centuries men have considered the conquest of these advantages—even by force, even by cunning and injustice—as legitimate, and their possession as a favour from On High. Most of the great kings of Israel, beginning with Solomon, had much the same idea of power as that held to-day by Dr. Rosenberg<sup>47</sup>. Indeed that is the real reason why the totalitarian states must necessarily eliminate their Jews, since each citizen of those

states believes himself one of God's elect, and there is no room in the world for two Chosen Peoples.

One fact, one plain fact ought to open your eyes: throughout the ages, the sacrifice most agreeable to God has always been believed to be that of the weak and the innocent. Everywhere, in every age, through thousands of centuries, the ideas of prayer, grace, purification and atonement, have been inseparably linked to the foul image of slaughtered beasts, on altars streaming with lustral blood.

The men of the Middle Ages were neither chaste nor very merciful, but it would never have entered into their minds to do honour as the ancients did, to lust and cruelty—to set up altars to them. They slaked their passions, they did not deify them. Possibly they were rarely capable of following the example of Saint Louis<sup>48</sup>, or even of the good Sieur de Joinville<sup>49</sup>, yet the grossest most hard-hearted of them all, never doubted that a just king was better than a powerful one, that nobody, on the pretext that he served the State, could justify his breach of the law of honour common to knights and princes, from which one poor wretch—indispensable for the lowest tasks—was abjectly immune: the executioner.

It is hard to imagine any place in a totalitarian Europe for a Saint Louis or a Joinville . . . nor for France.

❧ ❧ No doubt Herr Hitler will reply: 'I cannot see any place for her either. If our law is still too harsh for France, we will begin by letting her be romanized by a new Caesar. Circumstances are not less favour-

able than they were two thousand years ago. Gaul torn with factions is awaiting a master. The powerful classes, harried by the populace, long for the restoration of law and order, even at the price of invasion, since they are sure, or fancy they are sure, to absorb their conqueror—just as they were two thousand years ago.

‘There will always be obstacles. The armed Peacemaker, come to subdue the mob in the name of a communal interest, will sooner or later show his real intentions. Perhaps one day he may find himself faced with a new Vercingetorix, a young French prince, who with tears of rage will hurl base men, collected here and there from shabby streets, against the mechanized forces of the conqueror. But this Roman and Germanic peace will by then have taken root too deeply, in a soil apt to receive it. The sages will once more remark that in politics, despair is a capital blunder. The rich will starve out this new Vercingetorix, as they did the other, and like the other he may be foolish enough to let himself be captured alive. A few women will mourn for him: no doubt a few patriots will secretly christen their sons—incribed on the state register as Caesar Augustus—with the Christian name of the dead hero. But an insurrection of blackguards, obsessed with antiquity, like the puppets of 1793, will be the answer to all such timid protestations of faith and honour. They too will smear themselves with unguents to keep off the rheumatism, insist on their hot-water bottles, and drivel Plutarch day and night.

‘May it please the God of Greater Germany that this time Rome will send you not merely a few hundred

officials, but the surplus of its teeming population: colonists by the hundred thousand! And may it please this God to send you his parsons, his little Fascist ecclesiastics, his comic preachers, his epicene casuists, scented like casino croupiers. The Christian tradition is still so strong among you, that twenty years of such a government will have made you ripe for another Reformation, and this one won't miss fire like the last. My propaganda-bureau will always be able to find another Calvin, able to convert to some future Lutheranism your shallow minds, you incorrigible moralists. Any soldiers still left among you, ashamed of serving under bragging generals with shaven heads, will come to throw themselves into the arms of our noble Germanic Leaders.

'They will give us their women, and on ours beget a race of hardy Saxons. So that twenty centuries hence the name of the German Caesar, of German culture and German order, in a word, the name of German Peace, will fill your hearts with the same gratitude that you still feel for the Pax Romanum.

'By then our mission will be fulfilled. The Greek spirit which we despair of ever cultivating, the spirit of which your people were the depositaries—although you seem never to have realized it—will have ceased to ask the world a question which *you* have left without an answer. The mighty wing of Victory, stirred by the air above the summits on which Greek Liberty for so long has turned towards the Unknown God her ardent face, will be still for ever. We will clamp it into a concrete shell, like any other dangerous foreign idol, which our arms have conquered, and which our priests do not know how to sophisticate or even to

pacify. We will build a colossal temple, above Winged Victory, and then at last there will really be one people, obeying one master in Europe.'

Dear Herr Hitler, we are listening to your solemn message, and we believe we can understand it. Therefore it greatly strengthens our resolution. The peace that you dream, like the ancient Pax Romanum, cannot be achieved except in unity, and such unity can only arise from the blood of free peoples.

And, whether it suits you or not, any other project would henceforth be but a castle in the air, since the consciences which you are shaping have freed themselves from the Christian notion of Right. Perhaps you might have shown less haste in admitting this, for your race is not without sense of shame. The hypersensitive Latin dictatorships, inflamed with zeal, display their cynicism like a loose woman waggling her behind. Hands up those who can still take a dictator's word!

Dear Herr Hitler, it may be true that statistics and graphs seem to endorse your superb designs. In order to have some kind of chance of maintaining what is left of our freedom, with our forty million French, we should in the first place have to sacrifice them to some demi-god rather like yourself, and our old and humanized soil doesn't produce that kind of monster.

Neither Saint Louis nor Henri IV were demi-gods. Maybe the blood of Spain went to the head of our Louis XIV for a short time—the black, the poisonous blood of Spain. But most of his life the

RoiSolcil sinned as a man, and as a very simple man, never deluding himself, knowing his own weakness. And he died humbly at that Versailles of his, which is so like him, human, all too human, laying no claims to eternity, made to crumble piece by piece, like any mere mortal, but with dignity, in the midst of fine dignified trees, and beautiful still waters.

Dear Herr Hitler, we have never had a demi-god of our own, but we were expecting them, and we knew that one day they would come. No living man has ever experienced death, and yet on the whole, death does not surprise him. However prudently they may have taught us Holy Writ, and though the imagination of the majority of our priests is indeed feeble, there is not one of us French Christians who has not been told from childhood of the universal confusion which shall herald the last days of the world, and the probable advent of demi-gods.

☛ ☛ We haven't much to set against demi-gods. With the exception of a small number of traitors and cowards, we none of us seriously entertain the hope of matching our strength and ferocity with countries so heavily prepared that they will end by arming the babe at the breast. It has even pleased God that we should not be tempted to try. We lack men, and you know it, we lack men to work the engines of war. The menace over our heads is not defeat, but obliteration.

After all, what I am writing now, a citizen of Athens that had been anything of a prophet might have written in the days of Pericles. Yet his testimony would not have had quite the same significance as mine.

☞ ☞ Dear Herr Hitler, the time is coming when we alone shall have the keeping of the word: Christian. I do not say Christian truth, which belongs only to the Church. We know that a new Borgia, worse than the first, might occupy the throne of Saint Peter overnight—the college of Cardinals was nothing but Borgias at one time!—and the word of Christ would yet be safe in his hands.

I say the word: Christian. And I say the honour of Christ, for there is such a thing as Christian honour. It would be foolish for you to ask the Austrian Episcopate, for instance, to define that honour. For it has no definition. . . . It is both human and divine, but just to please you, we will endeavour to define it all the same. It is the miraculous blending of human honour and the charity of Our Lord.

The Church doesn't need it in order to last—and yet it is indispensable. Experience must often have proved to you, dear Herr Hitler, that when faced with a usurper of any kind, the conclusions of the theologian are not so very different—at least in appearance—from those of the realist. They both regard as master the Man who Wins. In Abyssinia as in Vienna. Ecclesiastics have more or less suppressed the principle of legitimacy, perhaps hoping that they could confiscate it to their own advantage. Unluckily that hope seems to have been crushed. Their temporal legitimacy has had to share the common fate. But their very lives are now in real danger, and to protect such valuable possessions, they look wildly round for the ancient sword of honour, the magic blade which cannot be adjusted to all hands.

It is rather pathetic, when once they preached the



vanity of human greatness, and humbled the vain glory of consecrated kings, now to be jerking obsequiously at the sleeve of the first general who comes along, even General Franco. . . .

✎ ✎ And so never have we been so free to restore an honour to which nobody wants to contest our right. That honour is even more precious to humanity than the Greek tradition. It has therefore even greater chances of outliving its conqueror.

This tradition will not perish under your blows. We fear infinitely more the subtle tricks of a new Italian Renaissance, which in the same way as the last, will have its lawyers insidiously poison the very source of Right, in the name of discipline. Your powerful engines may put our lives at your mercy, but these turn-coat humanists, eternal pimps, forerunners of future savagery, threaten our very souls.

Dear Herr Hitler, no doubt you are hoping with their assistance sooner or later to take possession of Christian Rome, and cut us off from Catholicism, thus succeeding where the men of the Holy Empire failed.

May you put forth all your strength in such an enterprise!

For then, from Hainaut to ancient Provence, the land of Saint Francis, the long-lost knighthood of the Franks will begin to stir beneath our soil. The word freedom, which too often has become obscured in the course of our frivolous bickerings, will regain the religious significance which the Celts, our ancestors, once bestowed on it.

And the freedom of the French will become at a stroke the freedom of humankind.

Dear Herr Hitler, the brand of courage which you are forging in your factories is of genuine steel, we do not deny it. But it is a courage without honour, because it is a courage without justice. You are not yet aware of this, for at present you are squandering the long reserves of German honour, the honour of the free German men. The totalitarian ideal is still being freely served by a few free men. But their grandchildren will only know of totalitarian discipline. Then the best among you will turn towards us, and envy us, though we may be vanquished and unarmed.

Dear Herr Hitler, *this is not mere fantasy*. You have reason to be proud of your soldiers. But shortly you will dispose only of hirelings, slaves to their employment. The abject war, the impious war by which you intend to dominate the world, is already no longer a war of warriors. And so profoundly will it degrade the mind, that instead of being a school of heroism, it will become a school of cowardice.

I realize that you feel quite certain of obtaining from the Church all the dispensations that you care to ask for. But you are wrong. The day will come when the Church will answer NO to all your chemists and engineers. And from your own soil there shall arise in answer to her call—yes, even from your own German soil, both yours and ours, our free and ancient earth—a re-born Christianity, the new knighthood which we await, which shall vanquish polytechnic savagery as it vanquished the savagery of old, and shall be born, as was the first, from the streaming blood poured forth by its martyrs.

✎ ✎ No, we do not fear you most, dear Herr Hitler. We shall get the better of you and yours, if only we keep our souls alive. And we know that we shall shortly have to save them from the astute sophists in your pay. We expect the mass attack of the successors to the great pedagogues of the fifteenth century, the true fathers of the modern world, who will aspire to wrest from us submission to the conqueror, together with the retraction, penitence and punishment which they obtained, for one instant, from Joan of Arc.

After which they burnt her. And they fancied that with her they were burning and destroying for ever the miraculous flower of which angels might have scattered the seed, that genius for honour which our race lifted to such heights as almost to make of it, at one time, a fourth theological virtue—O our fathers! O our dead, O beloved dead, from the Seine to the banks of the Nile, along all the roads of earth, O simple hearts and folded hands, dust of names known only to God, our fathers, our fathers, our fathers! . . .

For even our Saint Louis, that king of chivalry, that Franciscan king—mediocrity is just able to accost him on the slant, the slant of professional interests, state policies, and who cares what? They sniff and smell about him, discriminate and argue, and finally justify him after their fashion. Of course the Saint has long slipped through their hands, and rests for ever in the heart of the Church Triumphant, but what about the tall fair young man of France, with his golden hair and light eyes, and the courage of a little boy? He was a prince too, who coined money and rendered justice, a temporal ruler, after all. In that sense no doubt he belongs to them.

Whilst the good, the unanswerable Maid of Lorraine fell one day into their hands, without name or heritage or title: all courage, all purity. Chivalry itself fallen from the clouds like a little glittering blade.

An unruly child who ran away from home, a vagabond girl dressed as a man, roaming great highways in wind and rain—roads stretching into mist, full of brawls and adventure—a moody, obstinate leader, and what else was she? Why, a page, a proper page, who loved horses and arms, and banners, begging her way, lavish withal, munificent: ‘When my purse is empty, ’tis the king fills it,’ she said, a true page, with her trim round hat and cloth-of-gold tunic. . . . And then, those last weeks among the old foxes, the professors of moral theology, the casuists, in the stifling court-room, and the small daring theologian appealing to God and His Saints, and the Church Invisible, with each clever question stabbing her, thrusting her to the ground, streaming with sacred blood, our blood, our tears, O Guardian, O Well Beloved!

How dared I speak of retraction! Retract what? She obeyed nothing but the simplest law, a law so simple that I fear only the tongues of angels could tell it: ever onwards!

No, victory was not in her life a wondrous event, some miracle, it *was* her life, the innocent rhythm of her life. How could she go back on it?

Her shroud was made of hissing fire.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Barrès, Maurice. 1862-1923. French writer and politician. Apostle of decentralization. His book *Leurs Figures* is a picture of French politics at the time of the Panama scandal.

<sup>2</sup> Toulet, P. J. French satirical writer; immediately pre-war.

<sup>3</sup> *Soleil de Satan*. Georges Bernanos' early and most successful novel; to appear shortly in a new English translation.

<sup>4</sup> Bourget, Paul. Born 1852. Novelist and critic. Admitted to *L'Académie Française* in 1894. Religious, psychological and snobbish in outlook; greatly influenced by English Victorianism.

<sup>5</sup> Mouchette, Domisan, Cénabre and Chantal. Names of characters in certain books by Georges Bernanos.

<sup>6</sup> The Country Priest of *The Diary of a Country Priest*, Georges Bernanos' most famous work.

<sup>7</sup> In *Les Déracinés*.

<sup>8</sup> Godefroy de Bouillon. Leader of the First Crusade.

<sup>9</sup> Tino Rossi. Celebrated music-hall star.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph le Maistre. 1754-1821. Neo-Catholic, anti-French revolutionary writer and diplomat. Attacked Voltaire and Rousseau.

<sup>11</sup> Descartes. 1596-1654. Famous French scientist and philosopher.

<sup>12</sup> Maurras, Charles. Contemporary French Royalist writer. Directed the Royalist newspaper, *L'Action Française*, with Leon Daudet.

<sup>13</sup> Phaedra. Heroine of Greek legend. Daughter of Minos, and wife of Theseus. Heroine of Racine's *Phaedra*.

<sup>14</sup> *Accion Popular*. Fascist and strongly clerical organization.

<sup>15</sup> Gil Roblès, José Maria. Clerical fascist leader of *Accion Popular* and *Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas*—C.E.D.A. i.e. Spanish Confederation of Autonomous Right Parties.

<sup>16</sup> *Etudes*. Jesuit Studies.

<sup>17</sup> *Rue Monsieur*. Jesuit headquarters in France.

<sup>18</sup> Celine, Louis Ferdinand. Recently celebrated author of *Voyage au Bout de la Nuit*, a novel, translated into English.

<sup>19</sup> *Carlistas* and *Cristinos*. Followers of Don Carlos (reactionary) and Maria Cristina (liberal) in the Spanish War of Succession during the 1830's.

<sup>20</sup> Fouquier-Tinville. Public Prosecutor to the Revolutionary Tribune (French Revolution).

<sup>21</sup> *Pronunciamento*. Declaration by the Rebels on the outbreak of Civil War in Spain.

<sup>22</sup> Calvo Soleto, José. Monarchist-Fascist, Finance Minister during Primo de Rivera's dictatorship. Assassinated July 13th, 1936.

<sup>23</sup> Ceda. See 15 (Gil Roblès).

<sup>24</sup> Claudel, Paul. Contemporary French poet, dramatist and diplomat. Clerical reactionary.

<sup>25</sup> Lamennais. 1782-1854. French priest. Philosophical and political writer. Clerical Democrat. Wished to separate Church and State.

<sup>26</sup> *Jacquerie*. Insurrection of French peasants in *Ile de France* and near Beauvais, 1358. Crushed with much bloodshed.

<sup>27</sup> Lepanto. Naval battle fought between the Christian League (under Don John of Austria) and the Turks on October 7th, 1571. The Turks were heavily defeated.

<sup>28</sup> *Maffia*. Action of Sicilian landlords in employing gangs of roughs to defend their property against the peasants.

<sup>20</sup> Sorel, Georges. Syndicalist writer, author of *Décomposition du Marxisme* and *Essai sur la Violence*, translated into English by T. Hulme.

<sup>21</sup> Prudhon, Pierre Joseph. 1809–1865. Socialist and political writer. Sayings; 'Property is theft' and 'Government of man by man in every form is oppression.' An early philosophical anarchist.

<sup>22</sup> The Dragon Caves. At Manacor, Majorca.

<sup>23</sup> Bayard, Pierre Terrail. 1473–1524. French Knight, famous as example of Chivalry—'*Sans peur et sans reproche*'.

<sup>24</sup> Azana, Mañuel. Leader of Republican-Left in Spain. Elected second President of the Republic, May 1936.

<sup>25</sup> Bainville, Jacques. Born 1879. Historian and journalist. Monarchist in tendency. Foreign editor of *L'Action Française*.

<sup>26</sup> Baudelaire's glazier. See Baudelaire's *Petits Poèmes en Prose*. Baudelaire was annoyed with a glazier for selling ordinary white glass rather than rose-coloured glass.

<sup>27</sup> Catholic Action. Attempt on the part of the Vatican to counteract Communist teaching etc. by organizations of laymen to apply Catholic doctrine on the social question.

<sup>28</sup> Comte, Auguste. 1798–1857. Very celebrated French philosopher—the father of Positivism.

<sup>29</sup> *Urbs*. The City i.e. Rome.

<sup>30</sup> Encyclopaedic atheism. The atheism of the French encyclopaedists i.e. Diderot, Voltaire, etc.

<sup>31</sup> Prieto, Indalecio. Leader of centrist faction in Socialist party of Spain. Former Minister of Public Works. Government Minister of Air and Marine.

<sup>32</sup> Lisieux. Birthplace of Saint Thérèse, generally known as 'The little Flower'. Born 1870 and recently canonized.

<sup>33</sup> *Poverello*. St. Francis of Assisi—'the little poor man'.

<sup>34</sup> Châteaubriand, François Réné. Romantic and reactionary novelist who wrote about glorified and impossible Red Indians—much as Fennimore Cooper wrote about 'Redskins', and Walter Scott 'Highlanders'.



<sup>44</sup> Jaurès. 1859-1914. French Socialist leader who was assassinated on the eve of the Great War.

<sup>45</sup> *Osservatore Romano*. Official Vatican newspaper.

<sup>46</sup> Ohnet, Georges. 1848-1918. Sentimental French Victorian novelist.

<sup>47</sup> Dr. Rosenberg. Born 1893. German-Russian. Much influenced by Streicher (anti-Semite), Houston and Stewart Chamberlain. Head of Nazi Foreign Department. Entrusted with the political and philosophical training of the Nazi Party.

<sup>48</sup> Saint Louis. Famous French king, and patron Saint of France.

<sup>49</sup> Sieur de Poinville, Jean. 1224-1319. Old French chronicler much in the manner of Froissart. Friend of Saint Louis, whose life he wrote.

